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Marie Antoinette
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MARIE ANTOINETTE

BY

ALICE BIRKHEAD B.A.

AUTHOR OF
"THE STORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION"
"HEROES OF MODERN EUROPE"
"CHARLES XII" "PETER THE GREAT"
ETC.

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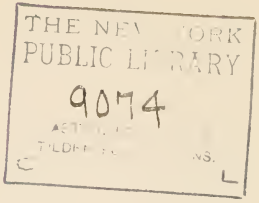

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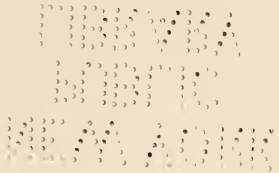

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VERSAILLES

Here, in the palace gardens, where the stately fountains play,
And a quiet sunshine bathes the land in the balm of an April day,
It is pleasant to sit and dream awhile of the things that have passed away.

For if much has changed, there is much remains ; and half of the trees that grow
Were planted here in the Bourbon days, when a king was a king, you know ;
And they watched them, all the women and men who walked here long ago ;

Duke and Marquis and Abbé, who lounged on the terrace stair,
With a stately bow to the wise and great, and a nod to Molière ;
And dainty dames with the tarnished names, and the smiles and the powdered hair.

Ah ! life was life in the palace then, and the world was a gallant place,
With the polished ways and the pungent phrase and the ruffles, and swords, and lace,
And sin was hardly a thing to shun when it beckoned with such a grace.

Music and wit and laughter, and pleasure enthroned in state,
And the gardens bright with a fairy light at many a summer fête ;
And ruin and famine and death and Hell not half a mile from the gate !

Hell, and they couldn't see it! Death, and they only played!
For a serf—why a serf was born to serve, and a monarch to be obeyed;
Till the tumbrels came and the guillotine: but at least they were not afraid.

Shadows among the shadows, they flit through the chequered ways,
And the long, straight walks, where the elm-trees grow, and the time-worn statues gaze
Silent and cold, and grey and old, like the ghosts of forgotten days.

Kindly, blundering Louis, and beautiful Antoinette,
With the royal face, and the human heart, and the tears—could we but forget!
Down there is the little Trianon; perhaps we shall see her yet!

Poor girl-queen! It's hard to be great; and you tried, and we can but try:
But what you took for the Truth and France was only a painted lie:
Did you know it at last, and understand, when the time had come to die?

Nay, I trust you did: for if Truth brings pain, I hold it is better far,
Were it only once, for a moment's space, like the flash of a falling star,
To pierce the cloud that has dimmed our eyes, and to see things as they are.

For a " sunshine king " is a costly thing when monarch and man are blind,
And somebody reaps the whirlwind when others have sowed the wind,
And if death and famine stalk through the land, it isn't enough to be kind.

King and Queen, who were boy and girl, long since, ere the die was cast,
Was it all a riddle too hard to solve? Poor souls! You have wept and passed,
And after the din and the strife and sin there is peace, we hope, at the last.

And now the Tricolour triumphs where once the Lilies reigned;
Its red is red with a sea of blood, and the white—ah! the white is stained,
But a giant lie has been swept away, and France and the world have gained.

G. F. BRADBY
(*By permission of the Author*)

CHAPTER I: *A Lily for a Lily*

THE second of November 1755 was the ill-omened birthday of the eighth child of Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, and Francis I of Lorraine, Emperor of Germany. The envoys, sent to Portugal to beg sponsors for the royal infant, hurried back with news of terrible disaster. An earthquake had destroyed Lisbon and no less than one-third of the total population. Horror at such a catastrophe cast a deep gloom over Europe, and especially saddened the allies of the House of Bourbon. It was the fate of Marie Antoinette Josephe-Jeanne de Lorraine, to give her name its French form—to open her eyes upon a world which was shocked by a calamity that no man could have foreseen.

The Empress, having daughters in plenty, had wished for a son to fulfil her hope of an alliance with the House of Bourbon. It was Kaunitz, her minister, who was able to console her for this disappointment. The glory of his mistress was dear to him, and he

meant to combine the two great Catholic powers of France and Austria against the enemies of the spirited woman-ruler. Maria Theresa had found herself in grave peril as soon as her father died, despite that father's efforts to secure her wide possessions.

"To win a lily we must give a lily," Kaunitz said, and began to unfold a plan which destined the slumbering infant for a seat on the throne of France. Maria Theresa listened, trusting her minister though he vexed her by a thousand foibles.

No breath of air must enter the room where they held these royal conclaves, and every window had to be shut as soon as Kaunitz' carriage drove up to the palace. The Empress smiled in spite of her annoyance when she heard the quick tripping of feet that announced Kaunitz' haste to cover the distance between carriage and palace.

Maria Theresa prized faithfulness the more in that she had once been almost without a friend to defend her from the attacks of enemies in Europe. She was anxious to keep what she had won, and lent a ready ear to

the scheme which would advance the interests of her children. She was troubled overmuch by affairs of State for her husband had little time to spare from his sports and pleasures. Gay Francis preferred to hunt rather than to arrange for the marriages of his well-loved daughters.

Elizabeth, the third daughter of the Empress, was originally intended to be the lily offered France by Austria. Louis XV's first wife was dead, and he liked youth and beauty. Smallpox, then a scourge even of courts, ruined the prospects of Elizabeth. She was too faded when she rose from her sick-bed to win the favour of the French King. A certain party at Versailles rejoiced over her misfortune, for they did not think it desirable that Louis XV should remarry.

Kaunitz was still bent on an alliance with France, and now decided that Louis' heir should find a wife in Austria. The young Marie Antoinette was of a suitable age and must be trained with a view to this high destiny.

Louis XV was indifferent to the wonderful

tales that were duly brought to the French court to win favour there for the merry Archduchess, still engaged in the pastimes of a tomboy. He yawned when the ambassador waxed eloquent on Marie Antoinette's fine nature, her generosity and her quick desire to relieve the wants of poor children. He was not much interested, truth to tell, in that most moving narrative of her kindness to Mozart, the boy-musician. He roused himself when her beauty was described, and even asked to have her picture. When he saw it, he wondered cynically that they should intrigue to gain for so fair a thing a seat on the throne which he knew to rest on insecure foundations. The glory of Louis XIV still rested on Versailles, but the realm of France was fast decaying.

Louis had a new favourite whose fortunes had been pushed by the party at Versailles who were opposed to the Austrian alliance. Madame Dubarry was beautiful though she had not the advantages of high birth. In the course of time she gained such influence over the King that he squandered gold

recklessly to gratify her slightest whim, and disdained the appeals of subjects in dire poverty. It was not in his nature to trouble himself about the results of the discontent caused by such extravagance. He *wondered* at times why his ministers made so many mistakes, and his indifference to affairs of State was generally expressed by a mocking wish to know how Louis, his successor, would get on when he succeeded to the tiresome task of government. Not that this weighed too heavily on the House of Bourbon then! "To-day the King will do nothing" was announced whenever Louis XV did not intend to go a-hunting.

The court life at Vienna had a homelier aspect that was pleasant to ambassadors wearied by much grandeur. The whole family was gathered round the table when the Empress entertained. She had reason to be proud of her fine children, and saw them as often as was consistent with her other duties. She examined them upon their progress occasionally, and put them in the charge of governesses. Marie Antoinette

clearly was not under the care of conscientious women, for at thirteen she could barely read and write, and her ignorance for a future Queen of France was mortifying.

At this age France and Austria finally agreed on her betrothal to the Dauphin Louis. Choiseul, the prime-minister then ruling France, was a partisan of Maria Theresa. If the Archduchess were to present a creditable appearance at Versailles, there was much to be done in the two years before the marriage. She was handsome and graceful, but she hated books and did not find it easy to learn the language of her future kingdom. French actors were engaged to teach her a correct accent, and the Abbé Vermond came to the Austrian court to give useful lessons on the manners and customs that would befit the wife of Louis.

Vermond had not been a happy choice; he owed his position as tutor merely to the patronage of Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, and was inclined to be presumptuous. He determined, at the out-

set, to gain the favour of Marie Antoinette, and was not too conscientious in discharging his new duties. Only an hour a day was devoted to instruction when at Vienna, and very little more when living in the country residence, where the Austrian children ran wild every summer. The crafty Abbé soon learned that his pupil was easily bored, and therefore he talked of subjects that were likely to appeal to a hoyden with a share of vanity. He did not find her affection difficult to win, though he was singularly ill-favoured in appearance and of repulsive manners. Flattery and amusing chatter about the new French fashions were weapons which he found useful for his purpose.

Marie Antoinette tried on the head-dresses sent from Versailles, and became much fascinated by the descriptions of court life that were given by her tutor. She laughed with him at the ridiculous stiffness of royal etiquette and those observances of formality which were unknown at Vienna. It was natural that she should agree with Vermond that Austrian ways were best. She believed

all his hints that she had power to make herself beloved, because she possessed beauty. She was willing to listen to frivolous advice, and charmed by the respectful attention which the Frenchman paid when she had some whim that made her disinclined to read either literature or history. She contrasted her Italian tutor unfavourably with Vermond because he was strict and insisted on teaching her his language.

With such an influence on her mind, Marie Antoinette could not profit by the solemn days of preparation for her marriage. She attended her first Mass without knowledge of the grave duties that awaited her in France. She was absorbed in dreams of the delightful freedom she should have as she said farewell to Maria Theresa, who had been inclined to serious exhortations lately. More fondly she reverted to the memory of her father, now dead for some eight years, and the sincere lamentation of the people pleased her.

CHAPTER II: *The Court of Versailles*

VIENNA assembled when the state carriages passed through the streets bearing Marie Antoinette away to her French bridal. She sat erect, as she had been taught to sit, smiling mechanically upon the people of whom she knew so little. The crowd was a mass of blurred, pleasant faces to the Archduchess, accustomed all her life to believe that the sight of royalty was enough to make the people happy. She thought them all kinder than Joseph, her elder brother, who accompanied her upon this journey, and listened rebelliously to his advice, which was given in a rather patronizing manner. She rejoiced secretly that she was so soon to see the King of France for Louis XV had captured her imagination far more than his grandson, the Dauphin.

Excitement prevented the bride-elect from feeling the fatigue that she would otherwise have experienced. Marie Antoinette had led a very quiet life, and found constant novelty when she left her own country.

She was delighted to look upon French

scenes and see French faces when the frontier had been passed that separated her from Austria for ever. She had to put off her Austrian clothes and array herself in new robes when she reached the splendid pavilion erected to receive her. She looked curiously upon the tapestries covering the walls, and shrank when she realized the cruel scenes depicted. Jason and his two brides were shown—Creusa, on the left, struggling with the merciless flames of a garment, poisoned by the hatred of her rival, the dark witch-woman of Colchis; while the king saw, on his right, the children whom the sorceress had murdered. Above the distracted forms, Medea drove her chariot among the clouds and exulted in her awful vengeance.

The gloomy atmosphere had its effect on the spirits of Marie Antoinette, which had been so hopeful. She flung herself into the arms of the Comtesse de Noailles as soon as she was fully attired, and burst into a storm of weeping. The new French waiting-woman was a little shocked and responded coldly to a request for guidance.

The Comtesse de Noailles was punctilious

in her regard for forms, and thought it her duty to insist on rigid conventionality to the young Dauphine-elect, who had begun by showing weakness. She promised to be ever at hand to caution and remind, and fulfilled her promise so well that Marie Antoinette remembered the Abbé and decided to profit by his lessons. She dubbed de Noailles "Madame l'Étiquette," and satirized her freely. She was resolved to go her own way from the time of that first encounter.

As the forests of Compiègne stretched before the bridal escort, the bride felt a certain trepidation. In the distance she could see a knot of gentlemen with their attendants, and knew them to be members of the Royal family who had come to meet her. The King himself was there, she was informed with due solemnity. All Madame de Noailles' warnings were heeded just this once, for it was important to make a good impression. Instinctively Marie Antoinette stepped from the carriage, her hands in those of her attendants, and sank upon her knees in the profoundest reverence. The King raised her with a

kindly word and seemed pleased by her fresh beauty. By his side the Dauphin looked both awkward and ungracious. He would not speak to his betrothed more than was strictly necessary, but turned away and avoided her society. He was clumsy and plebeian in appearance and untidy in his dress.

The King, well pleased with the Austrian bride, showed her a marked cordiality. He liked to give jewels to beautiful women, and had given orders that a famous diamond necklace should be placed in the chamber at La Muette, where supper was prepared for the court party. Marie Antoinette began to love jewels mightily when she saw how these transformed her. In shimmering white and silver she looked older than her years, and Anne of Austria's necklace made her carriage appear even stately. One or two great ladies disliked the exaggerated dignity of her movements from seeing her on that first public occasion. There were two parties at the court, one of which disliked intensely this Austrian marriage which had been urged on by the other.

The King was courteous but as ill at ease

as so polished a gallant could be when he glanced round the table and saw the cold looks of his courtiers. A magnificently dressed woman sat by his side and was talking rather loudly. All glanced at her now—then glanced away with a disdain that the bride noticed with great wonder. She was told that Madame Dubarry appeared in public for the first time at this betrothal banquet, and the proud Archduchess was offended by the intimation. There had been mention of the adventuress in letters to the Austrian court though none realized her importance. It would have been Maria Theresa's part to conciliate, even though she despised. Marie Antoinette concealed her annoyance, but she would not stoop to veil it with a show of friendship to Dubarry. When an inquisitive noble asked what she thought of the court beauty, she replied, " Charming," and the matter ended.

At Versailles was celebrated the ceremony which united the boy and girl who presented a curiously incongruous appearance. Louis' heavy face did not light up, though his bride was flushed with triumph. She revelled in

the admiration excited by her vivacity and bridal finery. When she signed the register in a big childish hand there were covert sneers on the faces of one or two who detected a mistake in the spelling, but smiles surrounded her—the gallantry of Louis the Well-Beloved ensured a court of adulation. She looked even more attractive, it was said, when she put off the heavy bridal robes and dressed simply in the gauze and taffeta that showed her resemblance in figure to the Atalanta at Marly or to the Venus de Medici.

Painters began to flatter her on their canvases, which were bought by the King and by his court always willing to follow his example. A portrait of Marie Antoinette, blooming in the heart of a rose, pleased Louis so much that he gave the artist a pension to reward him for the loyal sentiment. Dubarry began to lose her charm now that the little Dauphine had come to Versailles. The favourite would have propitiated, but the younger woman was too firm in her resolve never to acknowledge one who had neither birth nor honourable

position to recommend her. She pointedly ignored all overtures, and Maria Theresa's letters advising her to be tactful and gracious were not impressive enough to change her.

The party in opposition to Choiseul became more openly hostile to the Austrian as they marked her treatment of Dubarry. They resented her frankness of speech and haughty manner. They twisted her words until they assumed different meaning, and made innocent actions appear questionable. Rumours even reached Vienna of the bride's head-strong conduct, and, unfortunately, Louis de Rohan was French ambassador there in succession to Mercy-Argenteau, who had accompanied the young Archduchess as a kind of guardian.

It was very dull at Versailles for the lively girl of fifteen who had never been accustomed to the restraints of court life. The day began early in the morning when she drank coffee with the King before he went out hunting. His unmarried daughters had been wont, year after year, to comply with the rules of etiquette. Louis demanded their presence not only early in the morning, but also late at night, when they

longed to retire instead of attending, in their heavy brocaded trains and taffetas cloaks which they would fling over their night apparel, the ceremony of *débotter* or "unbooting."

Adelaide, Victoire, and Louise were better known in court circles by the names which their father had given them in derisive playfulness. Stately Adelaide, once beautiful, but harsh and overbearing when the bride came to Versailles, was *Loque*, or Rag, in the common parlance of the Paris streets, which Louis learnt readily enough from favourites of such humble origin as Dubarry. She never forgot her rank, and disapproved of childish levity. She gave the key of her apartments to Marie Antoinette, but did not encourage her to use it very frequently.

Victoire, known as *Coche*, or Pig, had lost her first grace through the indolence which made her love her sofa in the window looking on the beautiful park of Versailles. She was religious enough to give up her favourite food on fast-days, but was always too self-indulgent and lazy in her habits.

Louise always ran up very breathless

when the bell rang to summon the princesses to the royal apartments. She was lame and deformed and had a furtive sidelong glance greatly disconcerting to her niece, who delighted in all beauty. She was too shy to speak freely except during thunderstorms, which made her very nervous and anxious for society. *Chiffe*, or Bad Silk, did not receive the most gracious of salutes from Louis XV when he rode off to his hunting.

Sophie, nicknamed *Graille*, or Snip, had met Marie Antoinette as she passed through Paris. The Austrian had been very much surprised to see a royal princess washing the linen of the Convent of Saint Denis, but true nobility, they told her, had brought this King's daughter from a palace. Sophie proved her devotion to the Catholic Church by forswearing silk dresses and donning rough frieze, by dining on meagre fare and relinquishing banquets. Marie Antoinette decided that France was a strange country and went heedlessly to Versailles where a thousand wonders banished that childish consternation with Sophie had awakened.

The Dauphine shared the life of dull routine natural to the three elderly women, and found that there were many matters upon which jealousy was roused. Madame Adelaide was bitterly chagrined to find that the card-tables had been placed in the Dauphine's apartments for the evening games, and resolved to form a separate circle. Play was not high, and the bride began to long for new diversions which the Count of Artois suggested. Louis had two younger brothers, the Count of Artois and the Count of Provence, both married to daughters of the House of Sardinia. The three families chose to dine together, and passed merry days acting privately some of the plays the King would have forbidden. There was no audience save the Dauphin, who enjoyed the performance, and there was a spice of danger in what they did which gave pleasure to the actors.

Letters passed frequently between Versailles and Vienna, the Empress wishing to keep in close communication with her daughter. The letters sent from the Dauphine were scrawled at the last moment before the royal messenger

started. It would have been unwise to write earlier because there were spies everywhere at court watching the Austrian Princess very closely. Remonstrances from Maria Theresa were met by childish petulance or quick contrition. Marie Antoinette was aggrieved that she must not hunt. She rode a donkey, not a horse, while she longed for vigorous exercise. Court ladies drove out in heavy *berlines* when they took an airing. She escaped when she could and spent an hour romping with the Versailles children. Artois was only a boy, and Elizabeth, his little sister, was a charming baby. In consequence, malicious tongues accused the Dauphine of strange, uncouth manners. The Comtesse de Noailles was ever at her heels enjoining the behaviour that should accompany rightly the cumbersome court dresses. Some had praised the bride's taste, but others declared she dressed hideously and yet spent too much money. An allowance of 120,000 livres was made for her clothes, but she had often not a single crown in her pocket.

There were real vexations rising from the

Dauphin's lack of response to his wife's affection. He did not care for her pursuits, but had delightful hours with Gamain, a working smith, who taught him to make locks cleverly. He had pored over maps during a lonely childhood, and swept the heavens through a glass as often as he could manage to slip away to the little platform whence he overlooked all Versailles. He inherited the skilful fingers of his grandfather, who had made boxes of much elegance before he ceased to care for hobbies. The Dauphine pouted when she saw Louis disappear, and was frequently annoyed when he burst into her rooms with dusty clothes and blackened hands, for she was dainty in her habits.

Provence was sly, and his wife was a jealous woman; Artois led the Dauphine into escapades that gave rise to scandal. The Dauphin was neglectful and Vermond was always ready with advice both wrong and foolish. It was well that Louis XV admired the auburn-haired young bride still. She grew to stately womanhood and roused

enthusiasm in Paris that atoned for the coldness of court circles.

Her first appearance in Paris had been successful. Accustomed as she was to crowds, Maria Theresa's daughter yet shrank from the huzzaing populace that greeted her when she stood on the balcony of the Tuileries. "Madame," the gallant old governor of Paris made haste to reassure her, "I may tell you without fear of offending the Dauphin that they are so many lovers."

Very often, therefore, the Dauphine went, accompanied by the Count of Artois, to Paris. Masked balls were a delight to her because she could mix quite freely with the people. They recognized her and loved her while marvelling at her gaiety of spirits. She had a sad life at court, where there were jealous tongues assailing both character and conduct. She fled from Versailles, to be received with cheers and the eager tributes that proclaimed her Queen of Beauty. Citizens came out to the royal parks for a glimpse of the Princess who satisfied their ideas of a truly royal bearing.

CHAPTER III: *Long Live the King!*

DISLIKE, and perhaps the dread, of death had caused the indifferent pleasure-loving Louis XV to avoid, whenever he could, all thoughts of his own end, though he was haunted sometimes by the grim shadow. He met a poor man in the forest one day and paused in the hunt to ask for whom was the plain deal box that he was carrying.

"For my father, sire," the peasant replied, and gazed long at the King, resplendent in hunting-costume, but pale from the shadow he saw cross his path, a reminder that he could not go hunting for ever.

"Of what did he die?"

"Of hunger, sire." The King turned aside, his feelings jarred. He put spurs to his horse, but the black thoughts remained. Of such a scene he was thinking when the words came from his mouth, "After me, the Deluge!" He would continue to spend, but well he knew that one day there must come a reckoning.

"For my father, sire!"

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Prayers and wild supplications had echoed through the churches in the memorable year of 1744 when the Prince, hurrying from one battle-field to another, was stricken at Metz by an alarming illness. Paris was in terror and priests interrupted their services to weep for the possible fate of one they held in honour. Then had they named him *Bien-amié*, Well-Beloved, a title become ironic by the time of Louis' last and fatal illness.

By 1774 the King had lost the hearts of a people who realized that he did nothing for their welfare. He lay alone, save when his daughters came, braving the danger of small-pox, then so dreaded throughout Europe. The nation turned toward the Dauphin Louis, said to be kind and charitable and without many of the faults of his weary grandfather. There was an anxious desire in Paris to see a queen upon the throne. Rejoicing was out of place, but it was very genuine when Madame Dubarry issued from the sick man's chamber and bade farewell to her gorgeous *salons*. Her face had been her fortune truly, and she dared not risk her beauty. Marie

Antoinette remembered with pride the brave Empress whose courage had nearly taken her from the world where she had been an heroic and admirable ruler, for Maria Theresa had nursed with devotion and had caught the infection of smallpox from her patient. There had been such real grief in Vienna when she lay on a bed of sickness that France might well seem hard of heart to the young Dauphine.

Louis called for a confessor and was duly absolved of his sins. They prayed for him in the Chapel of Versailles during a storm that drowned the solemn chanting of the priests and the words of awful omen. The court knelt in panic while the rain beat down and the thunder rolled as if demanding vengeance on the King. The Dauphin and the Dauphine knelt side by side, dreading the glory and majesty so soon to be theirs.

Few nobles were left at Versailles on the 10th of May, the date some prophet had declared would be the last for Louis. These few did not sleep, awaiting a sign indeed that would release them from a place grown

ominous. The candle in the King's apartment was to be put out intimating that messengers could be sent off to break the news of the King's death to other courts in Europe. Horses were saddled in the great courtyard, and equerries wore boots and spurs, lest they should lose an instant. Upon the yawning crowd in the King's antechamber a strange silence fell, for it was there they had awaited the favours of the King. They wondered if the sixteenth Louis would prove as complaisant as the dying King. Suddenly a noise woke the stillness of the night for the Dauphin who was restlessly pacing his apartment. Marie Antoinette raised her head with a faint comprehension of what the rush of feet might mean and the clamorous entrance of the eager nobles. "The King is dead. Long live the King!" In France it was an ancient law that there must always be a sovereign.

The news startled the husband and wife raised to a dignity now deprived of its first attractions. They began to pray, appealing to Heaven for guidance. "We are too young to reign!" the new King cried. He

was only twenty, while his wife was one year younger.

Crushed by the burden of taxation, the peasants had long murmured at the mad prodigality which squandered vast sums on jewels for the adornment of Madame Dubarry. They questioned her right to the splendid robes and the rooms where she supped gaily. She was pursued by curses as she retired from court, while voices hailed the new Queen as generous and kind—a woman who might raise the French throne to its traditional glory.

A faint echo of the first stampede must have reached the death-chamber where Louis XV was placed hastily in a leaden coffin. He would have smiled in his cynical fashion could he have seen the laughter and cheers that greeted the young couple who would have to bear the consequences of long centuries of oppression.

The new Louis, to be named Well-Doing, rolled off in his carriage to pleasant Choisy, while the May afternoon saw Louis, late the king, visited only by the State attendants. They buried him the next evening with so

The death of Louis XV

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little ceremony that the procession following the bier did not even don black clothing. Mounted pages rode at the side, and gentlemen-ushers found it part of their court duties to be present. They wished the service ended as the torches flared, lighting up the faces of curious citizens who stood about the streets in rows and watched their former king on his passage to the Chapel of St Denis.

In the convent, Graille wept for the father whose cruel jests had ever been directed at his daughters' lack of comeliness. She would have stopped her ears, could she have heard the gibes that were made in Paris by the crowds witnessing the interment of the Well-Beloved.

It was midnight when the simple funeral rites were at an end and the priests could congratulate themselves on having discharged a painful office. Day dawned almost jubilantly throughout France, the nation clinging most passionately to their old belief that change had come which must bring them good, that the old order had passed, and that a brighter era was beginning.

CHAPTER IV: *The Pleasures of a Queen*

THE reign which began in 1774 had a certain brilliance to gild its real insecurity. The Queen had grown to full stature now. She was no longer a child, but a woman of right regal carriage. She had vivacity and the joy of life which was so dear to Paris. But she was restless in her moods, often changeful and capricious in her choice of pastimes. She did not hesitate to gratify her whims, for she was Queen of France and expected lesser mortals to spend themselves unweariedly to give her pleasure.

Extravagant fashions in dress were introduced by a court-milliner who hoped to reap a golden harvest if she pleased the taste of a Queen possessing beauty. Maria Theresa was shocked by a portrait of her daughter at eighteen. She thought the head-dress, known as "Ques-a-ço?" (Qu'est ce que cela?), ridiculous, for when the coiffure was complete it was forty-five inches high from the brow to the summit of feathers topping

yards of gauze and ribbon and bunches of Provençal roses. The passion for expressing ideas of the time by a curious mythology was far more to the liking of Marie Antoinette than the studies which the Empress recommended to furnish her daughter's mind more worthily. She had discovered Madame Bertin, a very clever modiste, and soon began to wear great paniers and many costly jewels.

The King had chosen old M. de Maurepas for his minister, following the advice of Madame Adelaide, who wished to direct him. He was very pliant still, and could not make up his mind to dismiss the Abbé Vermond, though he knew the evil influence the tutor had on Marie Antoinette and disliked the man intensely.

A desire to please his young wife inspired Louis with unusual gallantry some few weeks after his accession. He remembered that she had expressed a wish for a country house where she might sometimes be free from court formalities and strict rules of etiquette, and so he bestowed on her Le Petit Trianon, a pretty pavilion in the grounds of Versailles,

where Louis XV had built an orangery. It was surrounded by fine gardens, and had an air of seclusion that was charming. Marie Antoinette decided that it should be hers completely. She gave orders that not even the King should be admitted without her express permission. A farm was built, where she played at making butter. There were strawberry beds which furnished rustic feasts, and stretches of soft greensward which displayed her toilettes to advantage.

Simplicity was not in vogue at the court though it reigned at the Petit Trianon. Many a proud bearer of a noble name was insulted by the new Queen's freedom. She would not observe the *tabouret*, or right of sitting in the presence of the sovereign, which was the privilege of certain great families. Instead, she bade all be seated in her presence, and took her place gaily in the stiff court circle. Her intimates were young women, chosen, most unwisely, for their beauty. The first was the pretty and foolish Princesse de Lamballe, who had an empty mind and affected manners, but was interesting

through the tragedy of early widowhood after a most unhappy marriage. The Comtesse de Polignac was her rival and successor—a handsome, intriguing woman who gained many favours for her relatives.

The Queen caused scandal by her frequent interference in the council chamber, where she was led by her energy and love of control and where she committed many blunders. "Let her be," said Louis when others would have stayed her, for there was admiration for his wife's more active nature in his own sluggish, easy-going mind.

The Empress of Austria was disappointed that her daughter did not effect more for Vienna in her interference with State business. Like a child, Marie Antoinette would have had the Duc de Choiseul restored to some office because he had supported the Austrian alliance, but here the King showed an unexpected firmness. He had formed a suspicion that Choiseul had caused his father and mother to be poisoned, and, in addition, Louis was a devout Catholic and knew that Choiseul had played a part in the banishment

of Jesuits. So the Duc de Choiseul came to court, and, after some intercourse with his Majesty, found it expedient to go home to see to the " tedding of his hay," not ill-pleased perhaps to escape the burdens of a ministry. Maurepas, who was finally chosen as Prime Minister, was grateful to Madame Adelaide for her influence with Louis. He was seventy-three and had had much experience of men though he had long been out of office. He had useful colleagues in Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in Turgot, whose duties were the heaviest of all, for he directed finance.

The long wars of Louis XIV had crippled the national resources, though not more so than the extravagance which had built Versailles at a cost of 500,000,000 francs (£2,000,000). Taxation fell heavily upon the peasants, because they did not give the personal service exacted from great nobles (The First Estate) in feudal times when there were frequent calls to arms. The clergy (The Second Estate) too often avoided the gifts of money which were supposed to be paid voluntarily by them. Fat lands were in

their possession, and many privileges brought them undue wealth. Under these two Estates the people groaned, holding nothing so securely that the Government could not take it from them.

If a man of the Third Estate, or the Commons, had "a fowl in his pot" (as Henri IV of blessed memory had dreamed of for every subject), he took care to put shutters to his window lest some prowling tax-gatherer should pounce upon him. For it was always the custom of such officials to note any signs of comfort in a humble dwelling and make further demands accordingly. The taxes were "farmed" in France by financiers, who were quite unscrupulous as to the methods they used in recovering the huge sums they had themselves paid to the Government for the privilege of being "Farmers." It was possible for these to make an exalted marriage after a very large fortune had been wrung from the unfortunate toilers of the country districts, since an aristocratic lady had to marry a commoner if her family became

impoverished. The rich *parvenu* was despised by his wife in such a case, but he had compensation in being received at court and in lending money to the haughtiest courtiers.

Turgot saw the nation on the verge of ruin and blamed the lavishness of Louis XV rather than Marie Antoinette, who was, however, fast gaining a reputation for extravagance. The late king had spent fabulous sums on worthless favourites like Dubarry. Thirty million livres had melted during his régime, and nobody had profited in the Third Estate save perhaps a few wealthy jewellers. Economy became the theme of every man controlling public money after Dubarry left the court and simple Louis XVI succeeded.

Marie Antoinette would have been impatient of Turgot's thrifty schemes, if the financier had not doubled her pin-money. She needed gold to spend on the delights of Paris, whither she drove constantly from Versailles under the escort of Artois, the King's young brother. This was an intimacy which did her much harm, for the Count was foolish and sometimes persuaded her

to return from balls so late at night that she had to slip through a side-entrance to the château, the King having given orders that the gates should be locked before he retired himself. Louis was very seldom seen at the masquerades which gave his wife and brother occasion for wild adventures.

It was at a masked ball that Marie Antoinette, when Dauphine, met a young Swedish noble who became her one romantic lover. Count Axel de Fersen was dazzled by the beautiful auburn-haired girl who dared to speak to him freely because she wore the disguise of a domino. Four years passed before they met again, but he was devoted to the Queen and was for ever faithful to her service.

Meantime the Comte de Provence and his intriguing wife whispered of escapades that were hardly to the credit of court circles. The Queen began to frequent race-courses as soon as " Anglomania " set in among the nobles. The King hated the English nation, and looked askance at the monstrous coiffures which were designed to represent a mimic

hunting field in motion. He was a daring rider, delighting in all violent exercise, but he did not care for his wife to show her skill as a horsewoman now that she scorned the donkey she had formerly ridden. Yet he was always acquiescent and paid her gambling debts, though he was seriously troubled by rumours of disapproval among the people. In the spring of 1775 riots took place because the price of bread was high, and bakers' shops were plundered both at Versailles and at Paris.

A visit was made by Maximilian of Austria to his sister, and offence was given to the princes of the blood who would not wait on him as the Queen demanded they should do, but insisted that Maximilian should first call upon them in accordance with the rules of rigid court etiquette. The boy Archduke was travelling incognito and should not have expected that formal honour due to a royal visitor, but Marie Antoinette chose to feel aggrieved at the refusal of Orléans, Condé, and Penthièvre to pay their respects to Maximilian. She offended the Duc de Chartres,

who had been her ally, by excluding him from a ball given in the riding-school of Versailles. She accused the French nobility of arrogance, and displayed her haughty temper freely. The quarrel ended disastrously for her when Chartres left the court and showed himself in Paris. His family of Orleans were resident in the capital, which the King had deserted in favour of Versailles. Highly-coloured accounts of "the Austrian's insult" to the princes of the blood were repeated with dark rumours that there were political motives for this visit of the Archduke which would result in men and money being sent from France to Austria.

CHAPTER V: *The Burdens of a King*

THE coronation of the sixteenth Louis was preceded by discussion. There were some who agreed with Turgot in his desire to have the ceremony within the church of Notre Dame in Paris, but the clergy were indignant at this proposal to break through tradition and save 50,000,000 francs (£2,000,000). Except the heretic, Henri IV, every King of France from Clovis, of warlike memory, to Louis XV, embodiment of the luxury of a later age, had bent to receive the crown within the cathedral of the ancient town of Rheims, whither angel hands had brought the sacred phial from heaven for the anointing of Clovis and his most Christian successors. There were a few drops of oil in the *Sainte Ampoule* still. It would have grieved Louis that they should not fall on him for he looked upon the rite as one of true religion.

Mercy, the Austrian ambassador, would have had Marie Antoinette crowned too. This was without doubt the ambition of Maria

Theresa. The Queen herself was indifferent, preferring to be the spectator of her husband's honour. She made vast preparations for the day, and Turgot estimated the price of her transference to Rheims at little below two millions sterling.

The peasants laboured through the early spring of 1775 to repair the road from Versailles for the royal passage. *La Corvée*, or forced labour of this kind, was one of the grievances they cherished. Called from their own fields in the sowing time, they knew that they would have no harvest to reap and could claim no recompense for work demanded as a feudal right by the King, their overlord. It was unpleasant for the wealthy, on their way to the great fêtes, to see bodies of exhausted men lying by the roadside where they died, if they could not manage to crawl further. It was annoying to be pestered by abject prayers for alms from labourers plodding homeward to their distant cottages. Couriers passed these with contempt as they galloped between the towns to carry orders for the Queen's reception. A suite of apart-

ments had been built for her at Rheims, a town accustomed chiefly to welcoming ecclesiastics. Wagons rolled from Versailles, containing hangings, tapestries and mirrors, gilt furniture for her rooms, and plate and linen for her table. Their own famine seemed harder to the peasants who caught glimpses of the splendour of Court life thus forced upon their notice. That it might not prevent the Queen from wearing the lofty headdress that she favoured, a new coach had to be built, eighteen feet in height. Very sumptuous it looked with cushions of satin and gold, painted panels and fine carving. But it seemed to drive over and crush men's very bodies when so many fell at their work and the price of bread was rising steadily throughout the kingdom.

On the 5th of June the King left Versailles and, halting at Compiègne, was able to reach Rheims within the four days. The keys of the city were handed to him on a golden salver as he entered. Bells pealed and cannon boomed in token of rejoicing.

At the great door of the cathedral Louis

stepped down awkwardly enough and fell on his knees to kiss the copy of the gospel which was handed to him. He brought a gift to the altar and placed it there with his own hands—a beautifully ornamented golden cup which glittered bravely when he came that same evening to the service. The Queen drove into Rheims by moonlight, loving the glamour of the summer dusk and the distinction of a separate journey.

Crowds assembled early on the 10th of June, knowing that the Cathedral would be a spectacle gorgeous enough to be remembered for a life-time. The ecclesiastical peers were familiar to Rheims, but that day they surpassed themselves in gorgeousness of colour and majestic bearing. Red and violet, gold and silver, crosses and chains and mitres—the pomp of the great Catholic Church was displayed magnificently at the coronation of this most Catholic ruler. They stood on the right of the altar while the temporal peers were on the left, clad in mantles of state that vied with the brilliant uniforms worn by the soldiers. There were ladies in court dress,

wearing pearls and diamonds—the stones that the Queen chose for her own adornment. Lofty plumes waved from their heads and lace and velvet gowns were envied by the wives of the simple citizens. "Louis XVI, whom God hath given them for King" did not leave the sacristy at the expected moment. Dignitaries of the Church knocked at the door which should have opened promptly, that they might lead him to the altar. When the King came forth there was disappointment in the hearts of those who had formed their ideal of a King in Louis XIV, the Grand Monarch of his day, or in Louis XV, the model of personal beauty.

Seven times the Archbishop poured from the sacred phial some drops of that most precious ointment. Seven times he cried "*Vivat rex in aeternum*" before he handed the sceptre to the King, who was already burdened in the heat of the June day by velvet boots and velvet cloak and the ecclesiastical vestment known as the "*dalmatique.*" Pages were in his train to relieve him of some part of the weight, but as the King

advanced to the altar his steps dragged heavily and even the solemn music did not appear to raise his spirits. The crown had cost 20,000,000 francs (£800,000) and was made in the form of a jewelled cap which fitted rather closely. "It tires me," the King exclaimed, and made as if to reject it on a sudden peevish impulse. A shudder ran through those among the crowd who remembered the words of Henri III, the most unfortunate of kings. "It pricks me," he had said, and later met his death by violence.

But joyous shouts and the flourish of trumpets banished the dark fears that attended the actual coronation. Thousands of birds chirped gaily as they received their freedom, having been kept till then within cages hung in the cathedral. The old liberties of France were symbolized and the heralds cried "*Noël et largesse*!" in honour of the ancient customs, as they scattered medals. The great fête was held in the hall where every predecessor of Louis XVI looked down in stone to witness the celebrations held in honour of another Capet.

The mayor of Rheims attended upon the King the next day to present the privileges of the city—"Our wine, our pears, our hearts," he said, "are at your Majesty's disposal." Grand-master of the Order of *Saint-Esprit*, Louis touched three thousand subjects, anxious to be rid of dangerous maladies. Some power of healing was thought to be given to him now, and he had the happy gift of freeing men from debts. The prison doors were opened, and all were glad except the creditors.

A grand cavalcade to the Abbaye of Saint Remi and the *Fête Dieu* concluded the ceremonies of the coronation. The royal party set out for Compiègne, leaving Rheims to resume its quiet grey aspect. There was a fine ball, and the Queen wrote very gaily to her mother of the welcome of the people. She was delighted with the acclamations of the crowd acknowledging her royal carriage. Certainly they could not think Marie Antoinette a subject for derision as they did the King whose return home was inglorious. Coarse epithets saluted him and

the Comte de Provence, for they both inherited the corpulence of their father.

Very shortly after these events the wife of Artois gave birth to a son, and Marie Antoinette had to congratulate her rival. It was a bitter disappointment that no male heir had been born to Louis XVI, and this child was to succeed to the throne of France, unless the " Austrian " should have a son.

CHAPTER VI: *America or Austria?*

THE manner of the Queen's life, which was of necessity spent in public and which was being everywhere publicly discussed, began to give serious trouble to Maria Theresa. Her love of gambling became more pronounced, and the passion for diamonds led to reckless purchase.

The winter of 1776-7 was one of severity in France, and the suffering populace of Paris looked with resentment at the pretty women dashing through the snow in newly gilded sledges. Crimson leather trappings and innumerable silver bells adorned the equipage in which Marie Antoinette sat with the Princesse de Lamballe, whose charms secured her a nominal office in the Royal household and a salary of 150,000 francs (£6000) a year. They glided swiftly down the road near Versailles, reached Sèvres and St Cloud and there crossed the river. Through the *Bois de Boulogne* they sped one day and a grave scandal spread abroad. The Queen of France

had flashed through the capital without escort and without ceremony. These were Austrian ways, unbefitting Louis XVI's wife, since she was Queen of France. Austrian pastimes, too, were causing, in a time of want, a great waste of the nation's money. The King himself could not well be blamed, since he had refused to follow the example of the Comte d'Artois and build himself a gilded toy to while away this time of winter hardship. He pointed to a train of wagons passing with a load of wood for the shivering poor of Versailles. "Those are my sledges," he said—kindly words often to be repeated.

Unwilling to submit to restraint, the Queen lost favour both with court and people. She agreed to the King's wish to diminish the household troops—a fatal mistake, since it robbed them both of prestige. It was a satisfaction to feel that she would encounter few guards when she returned to the palace in her mask and domino from some public ball where all, however, knew that the Queen was present. She liked to flit about the vast gardens of Versailles, attended only by one

waiting-woman. She had amusing encounters with the Parisians there, for every one of decent appearance had access to the grounds and often to the château. The King and Queen dining in public was a show watched curiously by thousands of subjects. It was so strange that Louis XVI should eat enormously and drink great draughts of wine, while Marie Antoinette took only water and was most abstemious.

For some fancied slight upon a favourite who had been recalled from the Court of St James, the Queen had resolved on the fall of Turgot, the Comptroller-General. His theories pleased the King, who believed his minister to desire the public good, but certain reforms had stirred the popular feeling against him through sheer ignorance and folly on the part of the nation. The nobility resented his efforts to free the Third Estate from oppression which they had come to look upon as natural. Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois became enemies as soon as the question was raised as to the necessity for such lavish expenditure in their royal

households. It was useless for Louis XVI to protest that Turgot was the only man, apart from himself, who was really interested in the welfare of the people. The clergy rose under de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, and declared the minister an infidel. They were afraid that his zeal for reform might lead him to attack the Church, and frightened Louis by terrible pictures of the possible rise of heresy. Turgot was dismissed, retiring without disgrace or shame, and his place was filled by M. Necker, a wealthy banker of Geneva.

Still dissatisfied, the clergy heaped reproaches on M. de Maurepas because he had consented to the appointment of a Calvinist to office, but the gold which Necker produced was dazzling to a nation which had lived in fear of bankruptcy. The director of finances borrowed money on all sides, for his own fortune seemed to give security. He was a tall imposing man of forty-five, grave and important in his manner, and very erect in carriage. His wife adored him, and his wealth sounded his praises worthily in the salons

of Paris. He seldom spoke himself but had an exalted air, and left the entertainment of his guests to Madame Necker, who rapidly gained a place in French society.

The Salon Helvétique greeted Benjamin Franklin as a guest of honour. The sturdy American statesman came in 1777 to ask the help of France in the struggle which had begun to divide England from her colonies across the broad Atlantic. He spoke French indifferently, and was out of place among the beaux in velvet, ruffles and fine diamonds. His leather cap covered a shrewd enough head, but his plain brown suit, stout leather shoes and knitted stockings pleased only through their novelty. Ladies of the court shuddered when they saw him cut melon with a knife, yet they gave fêtes for his visit and were delighted to take up the phrase, "*Ça ira, mes amis, ça ira,*" which was his answer to sympathizers with the cause of freedom. France and America were to ally themselves closely against the power of England.

Millions of francs passed from the French

treasury into Franklin's hands, though the transaction was secret like the alliance. Necker was able to borrow on his own private credit as financier, and Louis felt rich as he handled gold and gave of his bounty to Provence, his brother, and to the Comte d'Artois, who was in debt as usual. Marie Antoinette profited by Turgot's fall, and she lost the two thousand louis d'or which the King gave her at the gambling tables, where the *Jeu de la Reine* had fast become notorious. Professional croupiers came to take charge of the games, which continued almost without intermission. The Queen and court sat up all night, and on the solemn festival of All Saints they were too weary at mass to pay proper attention. Maria Theresa heard rumours of the play and charged her son, the Emperor Joseph, to remonstrate with the wilful Queen when he paid his visit to Versailles.

In April 1777, the Emperor reached Paris where he had resolved to stay privately as "Comte Falkenstein." He wished to see foreign lands that he might learn from them,

being a ruler who took his position seriously. At thirty-six he had lost the attractions of his youth, and the formality of his speech had increased since he escorted his young sister on her wedding journey. He was shocked by the levity of Marie Antoinette, and thought meanly of Louis XVI, who seemed weak and apathetic. His open sarcasm displeased the court, accustomed as it was to receive much adulation. The whole life at Versailles tried the temper of a man with strict ideas of dignity and the distance to be maintained between the sovereign and the people. The Château was the haunt of street-traders who set up their stalls on the spacious landings of the royal staircase. All kinds of trumpery were sold, and the idlers of the neighbourhood pressed close to the palace, where knife-grinders and vendors of cocoa, coffee, and gingerbread or "Ladies Joy" drove a brisk trade under royal patronage. Dancing and music made the place a fair-ground on occasions of festivity. The noise could be heard within the stately rooms which Louis XIV had built. Joseph sighed to remember

the fastidious tastes of that monarch and the lack of restraint that had brought Marie Antoinette to the level of the people.

Delighted at first to receive a member of the Austrian house, the Queen's enthusiasm for her brother was unbounded. She found few to re-echo her praise, and the Princesse de Lamballe and the Polignac family were insulted by the scathing comments which described their salons as the haunts of rascally *parvenus*.

Visits to the Military School and famous Jardin des Plantes, where Buffon received him, gave great pleasure to the Emperor. He was amazed to find that the King and Queen took no interest in such things, and rated them soundly for their indifference to the treasures of the palace, where priceless works of art were left to dust and oblivion in attics. He was a patron of art, and he played the harpsichord and violin remarkably well. One of the few pleasures of his unlucky sojourn was a night at the Opera, where the loyal chorus sang "*Chantons, célébrons notre reine,*" and Marie Antoinette seemed truly popular.

But the Emperor Joseph had little leisure for amusements, and ungallantly jeered at the rouge and powder and symbolic headdress, which was known as the *coiffure Iphigénie*, and had been specially invented for Marie Antoinette by the great coiffeur, Léonard. The design of this head-dress was of classic origin, and pleased the lovers of Glück's opera, *Iphigénie*, more than the Emperor. He spent his time visiting Turgot, the ex-minister, and other notables of France. He also went to the Salon Helvétique and discussed the great question of State finance and the best means of raising money. It was his duty to govern, and he worked hard that he might learn how to do his duty.

The interest of Vienna was to restrain France, if possible, from uniting with America against England. Letters from Maria Theresa to Marie Antoinette urged her to use her influence with Louis and the French cabinet, and declared that the policy of France should be one with that of Austria. But the Queen's influence was not very great, and Joseph did not obtain what he had coveted—the

support of his brother-in law against Prussia in his attempt to annex the province of Bavaria. Franklin was successful in his effort to enlist support in Paris, and in 1778 he had achieved his object and it became known that the French Crown would give assistance to the insurgent colonists of America against England.

CHAPTER VII: "*The Austrian*"

MARIA THERESA was disappointed by the results of her son's visit to the court of Versailles. She had hoped that he would gain a vast subsidy from France that would enable him to win Bavaria in spite of the serious rivalry of Prussia. She decided to use the influence which she still retained over the daughter who had married for the sake of Austria's welfare. It did not seem possible to the powerful Empress that Marie Antoinette should have no voice in the decisions of the Council Chamber.

Gold was actually paid out from the treasury at the urgent demand of the young Queen, but the whole subsidy was recalled before it could reach Joseph, Vergennes having represented to the King that it would be fatal to send help to Austria. Nevertheless, men in taverns everywhere were beginning to sing lustily of the convoy of gold, and in the same places the suspicion grew that the "Austrian" might be guilty of the betrayal of her husband's kingdom.

In 1778 the first child of Louis XVI was born—Madame Royale, destined to have the saddest of sad histories. The rejoicing was but faint, since Marie Antoinette had been praying for a son that the Comtesse d'Artois might no longer sneer and Provence no longer regard himself as the next heir to the throne.

The Queen rose to keep carnival, indulging in the wildest acts of folly. She returned one night from Paris in an ordinary hired carriage because the royal coach had broken down, and she longed for a new experience. When she was suffering from measles at Trianon she chose four gentlemen of the court to be present in her sick-room, in addition to her sister-in-law, Madame Elizabeth, and the Princesse de Lamballe. There was grave scandal in the *salons* over this last whim, and lies poured forth from the London Press, inspired by Provence, who earned the name of "Tartuffe" by his hypocrisy. Marie Antoinette's fair name was tarnished and they uttered it with insolence in all the streets of Paris.

Victories over the British navy were celebrated by the court, and ladies wore models, as part of their absurd head-dress, of the frigates ploughing the waves. Green gauze represented the billowing of the waves, and the coiffure was so popular that an Englishwoman, then in Paris, wore one in opposition. No less than five English battle-ships flourished upon her head and towed a French frigate as their prize into Plymouth harbour. She had to cross the frontier in haste, so hotly was the retaliation taken. Louis XVI himself was slow to take offence, but the Queen and her ladies were, in such things, patriotic.

The Duc de Chartres, returning from what he chose to call success, was coldly received at Versailles where both King and Queen bore him ill-will. De Chartres was accused of a failure in discipline that had meant loss of victory to the French fleet off Ushant, and the Queen went so far as to mention cowardice. Paris, however, welcomed the heir of Orleans as a hero of brilliant achievements, and presented him with laurels when he came with his Duchess to the Opera. The

insult of Marie Antoinette was repeated, and rankled in his mind as a dishonour that he would cast back upon her in the future. She had made an enemy of note for the coming time of trouble. "True as it is that I did not disgrace my race at Ushant, so true it is that *her* son shall never by me be acknowledged as king" was the harsh threat of de Chartres, to be better known afterwards as Orleans.

Scandal was still busy with the name of Marie Antoinette, charging her with waste of money on her favourites. The Comtesse de Polignac begged favours for her clique. The sums lavished on this circle displeased both aristocracy and people. Trianon was become a costly place in spite of the "Return to Nature" which the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau had inspired in the intimate circle invited to its pleasures. The Queen had built a little theatre and delighted to act in it. She played the part of *Colette* in Rousseau's popular play, *Le Devin du Village*. Parisians blamed her now for entering upon a public performance which must degrade her true position, but the King

was pleased to applaud his Queen ; and Mercy, the ambassador, did not mention that the singer's voice was often out of tune when he expressed his admiration of the entertainment.

Mercy had mournful tidings to announce as the year 1780 drew fast to a close. His mistress, Maria Theresa, died, and Marie Antoinette gave way to passionate anguish. Those imperious yet loving letters would arrive no more from the far-off Austrian home, a link binding her with the past, recalling always memories of a happy childhood. She was an alien still in France, and even the birth of a second child, a son, could not console her.

It was in October 1781 that the news of the Dauphin's birth was given out, and with it the news of victory overseas. Fersen, the Queen's lover, had played an active part, and Lafayette, the young French noble whose enthusiasm had led him to offer his sword to George Washington.

The Queen's position was improved now that the succession was secure and the hope of a Bourbon heir fulfilled for Paris. She

could meddle, if she chose, with the government of France, for M. de Maurepas died and Necker was banished after he had first revealed the dreadful state of financial chaos within the country he aspired to govern.

Louis was overjoyed by the birth of a Dauphin. He had laughed and wept when he heard the news, and presented his hand to the very lackeys for a kiss of congratulation. The market-women, arriving in black silk gowns, the full dress of their order, found him a father after their own hearts. They were all entertained at the Opera one night, and the chimney-sweepers, too, came in for a share of these festivities. Necker had left a full treasury though he had rendered accounts which warned the prudent of the embarrassed condition of the country. There was a gorgeous christening for the boy, and the Queen received a gift of diamonds, the jewels which she loved passionately. Her satisfaction was complete since she believed the nation loyal. She could not hear the jests of de Chartres in the distant Palais Royal, and " Tartuffe " sent the pro-

ducts of his pen very far beyond court circles.

The new year of 1782 was begun with gladness. Gaiety filled Versailles as the year wore on and Marie Antoinette took her place again on the little stage of the Trianon. She had the chief power in all affairs of State, discussing politics in the boudoir of the Comtesse de Polignac. There appointments were made according to a woman's caprice. She liked to be generous to her friends, and the blue-eyed, black-haired Comtesse, with her simple costumes and great charms, did not hesitate to beg, if poverty pressed hard or an honour were much coveted. When the Comtesse had been made a Duchesse, she could hardly bear to be parted from the Queen, and had her carriage always waiting, with horses ready harnessed, to bear her to Versailles or Trianon directly she was summoned. Her little daughter was married at the age of twelve, and received from Marie Antoinette a handsome dowry as well as gifts of diamonds.

The Princesse de Guémenée had been gover-

ness to the royal children till her family was ruined. Then she retired, and the post fell to the Duchesse de Polignac, with the addition of a generous income. There was jealousy, of course, at so many favours showered on one family. The Abbé Vermond distrusted the whole Polignac family, for he, too, was a grasping friend and hated to see the skilful Duchesse secure rich bishoprics and benefices for her intimates which he had destined for his own protégés.

Marie Antoinette had been so long swayed by her confessor that she was moved by his wrath to a quick repentance. She tried to bring him back to court after he retired in sulky disgust, and bribed him by two abbeys. His income was further increased by 80,000 francs (£3,200), to the indignation of his colleagues. It was so difficult to please all that the gentlest found cause of complaint, and the Princesse de Lamballe was given to idle gossip with the ladies of the Palais Royal that did the Queen much harm in Paris. For Orleans hated Marie Antoinette and sneered at the ingratitude

of her dependents. He did not believe that they would be faithful to her when the storm clouds burst, which he already saw above her brilliant horizon.

There was poverty in France and the treasury was empty soon. Necker's funds did not last long when extravagance was so reckless. In the frightful winter of 1783 the people of Paris fought desperately for black crusts, and the Queen's sledges dared not venture forth. The cry "*A bas l'Autrichienne*!" had been raised with the cry of "*Vive le roi*!" when a statue of the King was built up in snow to give some employment to the penniless and starving.

Great ladies of the court were imitating Marie Antoinette in the richness of their dress, and even the prosperous bourgeoisie increased their expenditure in emulation. Beautiful silks and lace were produced and costly furniture of rare design. Sèvres was already famed for porcelain of a particularly delicate kind, and wonderful tapestry hangings came from Beauvais. These luxuries of the rich hardened the hearts of the poor who were

suffering at the time and made the contrast between the Haves and Have-nots yet more glaring.

M. de Calonne, gallant, witty and brilliant, came to court promising the Queen impossibilities whenever she asked money. "Madame, if it is possible, it shall be done; if it is impossible it shall still be done," he said, and bowed low above her hand in the same salute which he paid to lovely Mme. Vigée le Brun, the celebrated painter of court ladies. Prodigal in his own way, Calonne was pleasant because he encouraged extravagance in others. He had charge of finance and knew how poor France was, but it was his policy to trust to time and assume the appearance of great riches.

The fashionable world entered with zest into any novelty that promised to bring amusement to their wearied senses. In winter they played noisy games, forfeits, blind man's buff, and others of a similar nature. They laughed when they heard that a new writer satirized their ways with his pen. There had been much talk during the American

War of an adventurer named Caron, who ennobled himself and became de Beaumarchais. It was in 1781 that the playwright had written his notorious *Mariage de Figaro.*

Marie Antoinette had heard of the play and longed, like most of the court, to hear it read. It would be delightful to see the manners of a world she knew represented on the stage. There were rumours that de Beaumarchais was a rogue, but he was surely clever.

The play had been forbidden, since it was a grave offence in the France of the eighteenth century to mock the life of monarchs and their light choice of favourites. The Princesse de Lamballe begged very hard for a private reading in her rooms. There would be only intimates present, and the playwright might be assured that no harm could come to him through indulging the whim of a great lady.

De Beaumarchais demanded authority to produce the work in public, and had it read before the King by Mme. de Campan, a court reader. Louis XVI was seriously disturbed, for *Le Mariage de Figaro* seemed to

him a very dangerous play. The playwright dared to denounce Lettres de Cachet—those sealed documents by which one could get rid privately of one's enemies. "It shall never be played! Never!" he declared. Paris and Versailles heard this decision with regret. Finally, the author read his play before a select audience at the palace.

Handsome, fascinating de Beaumarchais was flattered by the enthusiasm which the reading roused in the painted dames, too highly rouged to blush at the open sarcasms on their daily habits. The longing for a performance was increased. In June, 1783, orders were given for a representation at Versailles, but the King would not acknowledge them as given by his own consent. He stopped an attempt to give the play in Paris when a crowded audience was waiting for the curtain to be raised, and was firm in withstanding the requests of the Queen till April 27th, 1784, when he allowed the public representation of the piece in the *Théâtre Français.*

The play was so brilliantly successful that

the King feared the effect of ridicule directed at the ruling classes. "Tartuffe" came to warn him one night that de Beaumarchais had boasted of "overcoming lions and tigers," in allusion to the royal consent gained only after so sharp a struggle. Hot blood mounted to Louis' face, and he straightway took the seven of spades—for he was at cards—and wrote an order for the confinement of the playwright at Saint-Lazare. This arrest could not pass without comment, for the prison was a place of detention for idle and dissolute vagabonds.

After five days' imprisonment Caron de Beaumarchais was released, insulted by the illegal punishment which condemned the head of a great commercial house without offering him any explanation. He had laid bare in his writings the tyranny of trying prisoners with closed doors, and was now still less disposed to be silent on the subject of his grievance. He made Paris resentful and clamorous till poor Louis regretted the injustice which had been suggested by his brother. Then some atonement was made in the pay-

ment of a debt the Government owed, and all the Ministers were sent to honour the next representation of the *Mariage de Figaro*.

Beaumarchais did not care greatly for the money, being a man of wealth, and devoted the proceeds of his plays to charity, but he was jubilant to hear that the Queen and Comte d'Artois would take part in his next play, *The Barber of Seville*. This comedy was actually to be performed in the theatre of Trianon.

Contempt for the existing order of things was increased by the wit of this powerful, unscrupulous playwright. He held up before the eyes of the dissatisfied Third Estate a picture of the social life which was enjoyed by their rulers. The injustices of the law and the privileges of rank—men had brooded upon them long before they saw the *Mariage de Figaro* upon the stage of Paris; and now they laughed and mocked at the people they had taken for superior beings, conscious that the change would come which was heralded by the applause given by an audience composed both of aristocrats and plebeians.

CHAPTER VIII: *The Diamond Necklace*

A SELF-INVITED guest, haunting the Queen's fêtes of late, had been the Cardinal de Rohan, Grand-Almoner of France and formerly ambassador at the court of Vienna. Now a man of middle-age, he looked back upon a youth spent without restraint, and still squandered gold recklessly and treated both equals and inferiors with arrogance. Yet he would humble himself to get a glimpse of Marie Antoinette, either because he was infatuated by her or because he hoped that she would further his ambitions.

Maria Theresa had distrusted this worldly Cardinal when she heard stories of his wild courses at Vienna. She did not speak well of him in her letters to Marie Antoinette, and it seemed as if her daughter inherited this dislike, for she would never include de Rohan among her intimate circle at the fêtes of Trianon.

Her favourite, the Princesse de Guémenée, was his sister, but even so privileged an

individual had never presumed on the relationship to beg favour for that member of the family. The friendship of the princess in any case was fatal to the impulsive Queen. The nation was roused to furious protest by the news that the Prince de Guémenée had "thrown himself upon his creditors" and would not pay one penny of the vast sums he owed, for the privilege of delay was granted him by the suggestion of the Queen herself, and peasants and shopkeepers, and even Farmers-general, knew that during the King's royal pleasure they must not sue for money.

The removal of the princess from court might have restored somewhat the reputation of Marie Antoinette, had not the scandalous preferment of the Polignac family followed it. Soon there was a new party to attack the "Austrian," for she had offended the mighty family of de Rohan.

The Cardinal was slow to believe that the Queen intended to slight him though he received snubs from her constantly. He was vain and thought to cross her path and

win admiration for his fine person and fine clothes. A private fête was given in honour of the Grand-Duke Paul of Russia, who was visiting the court of France incognito. The Queen gave invitations only to her privileged friends, and was annoyed to recognize the Grand-Almoner among the guests who flitted in the dusky grounds of Versailles. She made inquiries and discovered that the lodge-keeper had been bribed to admit him.

Punishment fell on the servant and some ignominy on the Cardinal, which he felt keenly. Yet he was still bent on gaining an audience with Marie Antoinette, and not scrupulous as to the means that might be used. Chance seemed to favour him, bringing to his doors Madame de la Motte—who claimed an addition to her income from the purse of France on the ground that she was descended from the old Valois kings.

De Rohan was interested in the romantic story of this petitioner's life. It had begun in abject poverty in a village of old Burgundy, through which a noble lady, the Marquise

Little Jeanne de Valois 84

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de Boulainvilliers chanced to drive. Jeanne de Valois was gathering sticks by the wayside when she made her first appeal to wealth. She ran barefooted and in rags to plead for her father, who was cutting wood. The piteous condition of the child drew much patronage as soon as the tale was spread. The Duc de Penthièvre procured a place in the navy for Jeanne's brother, and Jeanne herself married a young officer in the Gendarmerie de France, by name La Motte. A small pension did not satisfy her, for she had all the tastes of wealth and a boundless arrogance besides. Very soon her household was in difficulties and she sought to make a further bid for the compassion of the great. The Comtesse de Provence gave her some help, but she was still poor when she tripped about Versailles waiting upon this patroness and ever looking for a means of advancement. Her fortunes were wellnigh desperate when she was introduced to the Grand-Almoner, and made a tool of him to gain her own ends.

De Rohan had long been the dupe of

alchemists and charlatans of various kinds, and had been interested in the strange science of Mesmer and the divinations of Cagliostro, who prophesied great things for him. He always wore a ring set with a fine diamond, created from no visible substance by this last-named impostor, and had much to tell of secrets communicated to him by a medium from the spirit-world. He began to talk to Madame de la Motte of the change in Marie Antoinette that time would bring about.

The adventuress eagerly seized the opportunity of making money through a man so credulous and vain. She declared that she had the Queen's favour and often went to court. She would push the Cardinal's suit if he made it worth her while. On a certain visit to the Grand-Almoner's château in the Vosges, she promised that she would obtain his heart's desire. She would bring about a meeting with the Queen.

The priest consulted Cagliostro and was confirmed in his hopes by visions in which the crafty rogue pretended to see de Rohan raised on high again. Cagliostro was making

a sensation in Paris at that time, for he had very fine *salons* there and a charming wife. Indeed his personality was unique, and his power over the minds of all who came in contact with him was so great that the Cardinal was by no means his only dupe. He had regular features, a fine complexion and extraordinarily beautiful eyes that changed in expression continually. Children fled from him in terror in the streets, where he wore a peculiar garment of blue fox that covered his head and partially concealed the blue silk coat beneath, an embroidered shirt, gold-clocked stockings and shoes with diamond buckles. Jewels sparkled from every finger and adorned his costly clothes. He said that they had been obtained by transmutation as had been the stone in de Rohan's ring.

Madame de la Motte became the close friend of Cagliostro and his wife, living under the same roof and attending the brilliant receptions which they gave. She probably unfolded to him her new plan for capturing wealth. She had the Cardinal securely in

her toils after her promise to bring him to a private audience with the Queen.

In the summer of 1784 letters were written by Rétaux, a soldier of fortune, on note-paper similar to that which was always used by Marie Antoinette. These were delivered, according to agreement, to Madame de la Motte, who sent them to the Cardinal as a proof that she had not boasted too rashly of her intimacy with the Queen. The signature was the clumsiest of forgeries, being "Marie Antoinette de France," but the paper bore the royal *fleur-de-lis*, and de Rohan was too overjoyed to be anything but credulous. He read them all and believed that his adoration was returned.

For a time the dupe was satisfied, but he began to grow impatient, as the letters hinted at new favours which might soon be granted him. He pressed for the interview with Marie Antoinette, the promise of which had lured him to part so readily with gold. The accomplices saw that the time for a bold stroke had arrived. La Motte went out to find a girl in the Palais Royal whose face

and figure bore some resemblance to the face and figure of the Queen. He found a courtesan, d'Oliva, and brought her to his wife.

A handsome sum of money was promised to this girl if she would perform a service for her sovereign and keep the secret all her life. She was dressed in beautiful white robes, and taught to say, "You know my meaning" in a purer accent than she was wont to use. When she seemed to know her part she was taken to Versailles and placed in the shadow of a hornbeam hedge, with a letter and a rose to be given to the great lord who would come for them.

The Cardinal, trembling with excitement, saw the tall, mysterious figure on the night of July 24th. He seized the hem of d'Oliva's dress and kissed it after she had given him the rose, for he believed her to be Marie Antoinette and paid homage as a lover. He was intoxicated by the vision of the dim figure as it glided to the shelter of a grove, and if a warning had not come from the confederates he would have followed.

Madame de la Motte found her victim generous after the signal honour he had experienced from the pretended Queen. She resolved to plot again, this time remembering that Marie Antoinette loved jewels. There was a certain diamond necklace which Louis XV had ordered for Madame Dubarry, but had not lived to bestow on her. The jewellers had spent much time in finding diamonds that matched well in their flawless excellence, and these perfect stones had fetched enormous sums and were too costly for anyone of less than royal degree. The alarmed tradesmen waited several times on Louis XVI, beseeching him to save them from the ruin that would surely fall on them if they could not sell the necklace. It is also possible that the King offered the diamonds to his wife, but she refused the gift. Now, according to La Motte, Marie Antoinette was eager to purchase what she had not been willing to accept from her husband. She would transact the business through an agent, the Cardinal, who had already given her large sums to spend on charities. The La Mottes had spent

In the shadow of a hornbeam hedge

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this money freely in entertaining great people.

In January, 1785, the jewellers were told to deliver up the necklace to the Cardinal, on the understanding that the total sum of 1,600,000 francs (£64,000) should be paid in four instalments. They were satisfied, because they saw a paper bearing the Queen's signature—a forgery—and sent the jewels to de Rohan, who passed them on to Rétaux.

The Comte de la Motte fled across the Channel to dispose of the diamonds in London where their history was not known. He broke up the necklace into single stones and obtained a goodly fortune through this means. Then he returned to Paris where the jewellers were watching for the appearance of gems on the Queen's white neck. She did not wear it at the great ceremony in the church of Notre Dame, which celebrated the birth of her second son, the Duc de Normandie. A premoniiion of evil came upon de Rohan when Marie Antoinette passed him with her usual cold disdain, and the Queen herself felt a strange dread that evening as she

sat at supper in the Temple with the Comte d'Artois and saw the Temple Tower loom darkly over the scene of the brilliant festival. "Oh, Artois, pull it down," she cried. He laughed and made some jesting answer to her cry of terror.

The jewellers became suspicious when the payments were not made. They insisted on seeing the Comtesse de la Motte, who coolly told them that the letter she had shown them had not been written by the Queen. Distracted by the fear of loss, they claimed an interview with Marie Antoinette, and put the case to her. She was implacable in the rage she felt against the hapless Cardinal.

In private council at Trianon the King and Queen decided that de Rohan must be brought to public trial, that the Queen's name might be cleared at any cost. A bitter knowledge of the insults flung at it had come to Marie Antoinette, and she would not, therefore, heed warnings that the Cardinal was a dangerous man of whom to make an enemy. He was connected with the proudest families of France, and his office should have

protected him, at least, from the humiliation of arrest in the glory of his lace and purple robes. He was summoned to the King's presence as he stood waiting to enter the Royal Chapel on the Day of Assumption, and came out with the Baron de Breteuil, Head of the King's Household, who put him in the charge of a Lieutenant of the Guard. The Queen's first deed of vengeance had been done.

De Rohan was a prince of the Church and a man of aristocratic birth. His family felt the disgrace of his trial, and whispered darkly of the Austrian's pride, which had brought such shame on them. The scandal spread far beyond the court, and the Queen's name was openly bandied in the Paris streets. It was believed by many that the Queen had actually received the diamond necklace, but chose to make the Cardinal her scapegoat. She had so often wandered alone in the park of Versailles at night that it seemed to many people quite possible she had granted stolen interviews and amused herself with an intrigue such as was charged against her.

The trial did not take place till the 30th

May following the Cardinal's arrest. Madame de la Motte had been taken in the act of burning papers connected with the plot, but her accomplices were more difficult to capture, and there were many delays before the evidence could be procured.

Madame de la Motte, after struggling fiercely to clear herself, was sent to prison and branded with the letter V, as *Voleuse* (thief); d'Oliva was set free as she was proved to be the victim of the conspirators and had not even received the money they had promised for her services. Cagliostro spent some time in the Bastille but was liberated, to the joy of the Paris rabble and the satisfaction of the enemies of the Queen. Rétaux was transported, and the Comte de la Motte escaped. De Rohan was stripped of every office by the King, and was allowed to leave the capital, where his name resounded on all sides. Marie Antoinette heard the cheers that greeted his acquittal, and knew that they were meant as insults to her. She had been foolish to expose her past frivolity in this trial, when each act was

cleverly twisted by the critics into a fault deplorable in the Queen of France and compromising to any woman of fair fame.

Madame de la Motte managed to escape from prison and went to London to tell her story, proving herself a victim of the Queen's duplicity and greed. She told it well and gained sympathy, for "Tartuffe" had poisoned the minds of the English with his malicious tales of court life. That was as brilliant as ever in the year 1786, but Marie Antoinette was broken by an intolerable load of shame, and she could never more find pleasure in the idle festivities of Versailles.

CHAPTER IX: *Madame Deficit*

THOUGH the brightest days of Marie Antoinette had passed, she was still a personage of note, an adviser of the King in State matters, and the ruling spirit of the Royal Council. Calonne was nearing his fall, a minister who had done his best to establish the security of France by summoning the meeting known as the Assembly of the Notables. There was little money left, and the people groaned beneath the burden of their wrongs. He called the foremost men to give up some privileges of rank. If they would pay taxes, there might be hope even now for France.

The Assembly opened its session at Versailles in January, 1787. An enormous annual deficit was disclosed. Calonne declared that not more than 2,400 francs (less than £100) had been in the treasury when he became the Minister of Finance. The needs of the King's State had been met by heavy loans. Only at the cost of some personal sacrifice could payments be met. The nobles shrugged

their shoulders and were not inclined to respond to this appeal. Calonne resigned, and left the country for London in great haste.

The Queen had played her part in sending him away. All her extravagant whims had been encouraged by his system of incurring national debts. She was blamed once more for wasting public moneys as Calonne passed into exile in April of that year. She was "Madame Deficit" now, and the alarm which spread upon the failure of that Assembly of the Notables did her no service in the public eye. St Cloud had been an unnecessary purchase, though she wanted it for her children's sake. Great offence was caused by the notice put up within the royal domain, *De par la reine* (By the Queen's orders). What Queen of France had ever taken so much upon herself? Even the private livery the servants wore, and their black cockade, reminded French subjects of Austria. The King's prerogative had been infringed. Louis did not feel the slight, but many of her friends remonstrated with Marie Antoinette. She refused to heed their objections and went

her way unmoved. She was busied with a plan for appointing a successor to Calonne.

Stories were whispered of the gallant offering made by the ex-Minister of Finance to fascinating Madame Vigée le Brun, the portrait-painter, whose *salons* were so crowded by great folk that ladies sat on the floor to wait their turn to be painted. Madame Vigée le Brun was said to have had a marvellous present at the New Year of 1786. A satin bag containing bonbons was presented to the artist, and, to her vast surprise, each sweetmeat was wrapped in a *papillote* that was a fortune in itself, containing an order for payment of a certain sum from the treasury of State. There was a box, too, of equal worth. It was costly in itself and filled with glittering *louis d'or*. The artist denied the suggestion that she received money from the State. M. de Calonne was paying for his portrait—that was all. In fact, he had not rewarded her lavishly enough. She had many debts to meet and an avaricious husband. She did not think it possible to accept an elderly lawyer with a wig as an admirer.

The ugly story, however, caused trouble to Calonne. He was dragged from his carriage as he drove to a ball, and the cry "*Voleur de papillotes*" raised. The incident was a warning that caused him to leave France. He felt sore against the Queen and not disposed to stem the tide of evil rumour that flowed toward the throne. In London there was a feeling that the "Austrian's" time would not be long. She had sent millions of francs to her brother Joseph when France was in sore need, and that alone would not be forgotten when the nation rose. There were demands now for a meeting of the States-General, the Representative Assembly of France. It had not met since 1614, being judged unnecessary by an absolute king, but it had existed originally as a power not unlike the old *Cortes* of Spain and the Parliament of England.

M. de Vergennes died, full of years, and the Queen herself was First Minister of State. She had Abbé Vermond by her side. He had a suggestion to make as to the new Minister of Finance. There was Loménie

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de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, who thought that he could restore the credit of the State. The people longed for Necker and his solid wealth, but the "Genevese charlatan" was no favourite with the King, who thought Necker dominated too much by his wife! He agreed with Marie Antoinette that the suggestion of Vermond had been wise. In May, 1787, de Brienne became Minister of Finance. He had opposed Calonne in the Assembly of the Notables. By his will that Assembly was dissolved. It had done little more than expose the imminent peril of the State, he thought; yet a voice was raised to ask for an appeal to be made to the Three Estates. The voice was that of the Marquis de Lafayette, who had already done well for the cause of freedom in America.

The new minister could raise no money, impose no taxes, since the *Parlement* would not register his new decree. He banished the *Parlement*, but the step was useless. Away from Paris, the body of lawyers talked of the States-General, too. Nobles, clergy, and people must concur before fresh imposts were

put upon the realm. Loménie de Brienne was baffled in his plans. He was supported by Vermond, his old protégé, and by Marie Antoinette. He struggled for a time to maintain the position he had been presumptuous in assuming. In August, 1787, he resigned, and the joy of France found expression in lighting a bonfire, where an effigy of the Archbishop burned merrily to the music of such instruments as tongs, shovels, kettles and pans. These clashed to the saying "*Vive Henri Quatre,*" for the King of Navarre was remembered always as one who had dealt kindly with the poorest in his realm.

The Queen alone lamented Loménie de Brienne. She gave him her portrait set in diamonds and paid much honour to Madame de Canisy, his young niece. She extended a cold welcome to Necker's ugly, clever daughter that made this first cordiality more conspicuous. There had been some plan to marry Count Axel de Fersen to Mlle Necker, but the Swedish noble declined to be the rival of de Stäel, the Ambassador of Sweden, who duly won his suit.

Fersen had come back to Europe, honoured for the part he had played in colonial warfare. Steadfast and silent, he appeared at Versailles, for he loved the Queen, and his devotion was returned, but the hour of service had not yet come. He seemed very far from the thoughts of Marie Antoinette. She recalled Necker—as she had dismissed Calonne—to show her power and her desire to rule, but she did not share in the wild enthusiasm which welcomed the stately return to Paris of the former Director of Finance. She heard rather scornfully that buttons, waistcoats and snuff-boxes were adorned with likenesses of his heavy, pompous face, and smiled a little sourly as she saw the rapture of the well-dowered Madame de Stäel. It did not seem expedient to her to assume a joy she did not feel. Therefore she had sped Madame de Canisy with most gracious words, and turned slightingly from the ill-dressed Republican ambassadress who despised the elegancies of life. She had not won popularity by recalling Necker, though France had longed for his return. She was "Madame Deficit"

still, forgotten for a while because the people had room for one thought alone. The States-General was to meet in the May of 1789.

The Queen's boudoir-council was occupied with discussing this vast meeting of men from all parts of France, representing the Three Estates (nobles, clergy, and commons). The last had double the number of deputies because their numbers were so great, but these were to be clothed still in the ancient fashion of the *vilains*, leaving the plumed head-dress and broideries of Henri Quatre to their betters in the State. Marie Antoinette's imagination had been pleased by a revival of the old court-dress when she designed new pleasures for the court. In solemn conclave she decided with her friends that the humblest of her subjects must be content with the plain felt hat, without feather or ribbon bow, the muslin cravat, and sombre cloak that marked the plebeian. It had long been easy to distinguish a poor man in the Paris streets. He must wear black clothing that would not be spoilt by the mud from carriage wheels.

CHAPTER X: *Long Live Orleans!*

ALL France was in a ferment of excitement as the election of the deputies went on throughout the memorable spring of 1789. The people seemed already free, for every man might vote, every injured citizen set forth his plaints in the innumerable *cahiers* of grievances prepared in distant parishes, where hitherto there had been scant hope that justice would condescend to listen if there were complaints. Five million helped to choose the representatives of a nation on the eve of liberty, five million warring desperately among themselves. The higher clergy found rebels among the parish priests. Some two hundred were ready when the time came to acknowledge opinions they had not dared to show when the Second Estate was in full power. There was jealousy and bickering also in the First Estate. In Brittany the nobles refused to elect any deputies at all. It was well for the commons that wise Mounier of Grenoble took the lead and was ready to give counsel if

dire perplexity arose. It proved no easy matter to elect the twelve hundred deputies who were to come to Versailles on the fourth of May. There had been unusual hardship throughout the entire winter. The sun shone out, at last, and the great day opened with the warmth of spring.

France had sent thousands toward Paris and Paris sent thousands to Versailles. Rooms had been packed the night before, and the poorer deputies looked rather ruefully at the hard-won guineas which they paid out for their beds, for the magnificent habits of the court at Versailles made it an expensive place. There had been murmurs in distant provinces that the Assembly of Representatives ought to be summoned to the Capital itself, but Louis XVI was still an absolute King. He looked to Necker, that strong Swiss, to check the will of the people if they showed signs of new obstinacy as a result of their new privilege.

A solemn religious procession was to celebrate the Fourth of May. No State business could be celebrated until the pageant had

passed from Notre Dame to the church of Saint Louis, patron-saint of the King.

Versailles was magnificent that day, not only with the glories of the summer sky, the cloudless beauty of an ideal May, but the streets hung with tapestries and banners made the bravest show. There was the sound of trumpets in the air and the martial roll of drums. The bells chimed out to remind the worldly of the hour for Mass. Plumes and jewels were in evidence to show the last brilliance of the splendid court. Fair, painted faces smiled as if they were assured that pleasures could never end. The nobility made a proud band, as they walked in step, with their dresses richly ornamented in gold. Colours blazed in the sunlight as they passed. Monsieur and his brother Artois were the most resplendent of them all. They were aided by two other princes of the blood in carrying the poles of a canopy held above the sacrament borne by the Archbishop of Paris. The clergy of Versailles had set out first of all. The sombre masses of the commons walked before the court. There was among

their ranks one of the nobility at least—the Marquis of Mirabeau, ugly, powerful, a king among the people of the Third Estate.

Orleans sought popularity still and held aloof from his own ranks, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction as he heard the salutations of the crowd. He hoped to be King of France one day, for he foresaw that Louis XVI would know evil days. He had worked secretly among the disaffected long ere this, and exulted as he heard the cry, "Long live Orleans!" He listened for the same cheers to greet the King and court. Louis had done a good deed in summoning the Three Estates. There were some to acknowledge his kindness on that fateful march.

There was silence as the Queen passed, erect and stately in her royal robes. The sun shone upon her auburn head, and she looked singularly graceful in contrast with the King. No glittering cloth, no jewels could shed the lustre of high dignity on Louis the Well-Doing, but he had pleased the nation and they were willing to give thanks. All their hatred of Marie Antoi-

nette found echo in the menacing cry some women raised, "Long live Orleans!" That they should dare to cheer her enemy as she passed was ominous to the Queen of France. She would have ignored the insult but her strength failed and she stumbled. Bystanders of cruel nature whispered to each other that the blow had told.

The Queen would have fainted if the Princesse de Lamballe had not been at hand. It must have been the crowning humiliation of the day to her. She was impatient of this crowd and its clamouring for rights. Within her heart contempt rose and she saw them overthrown. She had kinsfolk who would aid her with an army as she had aided them with gold.

Within the church of Saint Louis there were emblems of the majesty of France. Under a canopy of purple velvet the royal couple sat, and the golden *fleur-de-lis* of the Bourbon line was richly embroidered in honour of the name. The service was not long, but the Queen found the sermon tedious enough. She was thinking of her eldest son,

who lay dying meanwhile. She had already lost her youngest child and the loss had been severe. Public business could not wholly fill her mind as she thought of the little boy, never to be King of France.

His mother passed out of the church on this May afternoon and did not heed the disdainful silence of the crowd, because she was torn by anxiety for the welfare of her child. She wondered how he fared, and if he could hear the tumult that was the sign of a new spirit in the Third Estate.

A month after this first meeting of the States-General the little Dauphin died, and a great cry arose. The Queen called out to God, forgetting, in her new anguish, the perils of the throne. The child was taken to lie among the kings at Saint Denis, after the nobles had been brought to pay reverence to the dead. The Duc de Normandie was proclaimed the heir to France, but there was now a possibility that he might not reign.

The Revolution had begun, but the Crown had not ceased to exercise its powers. Marie Antoinette rallied from the first shock of

grief to urge the King that he should check the Representatives of the Third Estate. The order was given that there should be a Royal Session to decide whether the three Orders were to vote separately or not. Unless the deputies met together in one chamber the people would be reduced to servitude again. Some of the clergy held aloof now from the Second Estate, and stood by the Third Estate in their insistent demands.

Meanwhile the Hall, where the Royal Session would be held, was cleared, by the King's command, till the 22nd of June, and workmen were busy preparing it for that day, when the deputies came streaming through the streets of Versailles to hold conclave on the burning question of the hour. It was raining, and their court suits would be ruined if they lingered too long out-of-doors. A placard had been put up to proclaim the King's decree. Men read it and looked at one another in perplexity. Mirabeau was there, and Bailly the President—they had heard nothing of this check before. They held a brief consultation and then made their way to

a sheltered tennis-court which happened to be unoccupied. They closed their umbrellas and felt secure from storm. A goodly number of the Third Estate had gathered, when Bailly decided that it was high time to act. He stood upon a table, and one by one the deputies came to him and took a solemn oath that they formed the National Assembly of France, and would meet in any place they found till they had given a constitution to their country and knew that it had no longer need of them.

Six hundred hands were uplifted in the court, where nets and rackets—silent witnesses of the "pastime of princes"—now witnessed a more solemn game. "It was the greatest game of tennis ever played on earth, and the balls were the crowns, even the heads, of kings."

Only one man refused to take the oath—Martin d'Auch of Languedoc—and the infamy of his refusal lives until this day. The six hundred have their names inscribed, each encircled by a wreath, while the space for the name of Martin Auch is left a blank.

CHAPTER XI: *The Call to Arms*

MORE and more Marie Antoinette began to hate all those who were preparing to attack the birthright of the children whom she fondly loved. She believed that the people were cowards at heart, and cherished a desire to beat them to submission if they should rebel. Paris could be chastised by mercenaries until it acquiesced in the old Order which was so sharply criticized.

Strange rumours spread through the streets, of regiments assembling to guard the throne of France against the French. The National Assembly formed a National Militia when they heard, and organized it with a rapidity that proved their military skill. Lafayette was placed at the head of the Militia, to the desperate chagrin of Marie Antoinette. He had once been a gallant of her court, and the Queen did not like to think of the spirit of enthusiasm which had led her to drive in her carriage with the democratic hero's wife when he returned to France. It was some

consolation to reflect that Count Fersen at least was an aristocrat. He was still loyal to his King and Queen, though he had helped to win liberty for the revolting colonies.

The mercenaries would have to be dismissed. There were protests against them as early as the month of June. Meantime old Maréchal Broglie visited the court and promised to treat Paris as a hostile camp, if there should be continued resistance to the Crown. He looked with disdain upon the new spirit of the age, having placed his confidence in soldiers for more than seventy years.

The Queen and the Count of Artois warmly seconded the Marshal's plans. Versailles was like a camp, and the German and other mercenaries were drawing near. "In a word," said Mirabeau, enraged, "preparations for war strike every eye and fill every heart with indignation." He spoke truth.

Necker was to be dismissed, and Breteuil, a Queen's man, should take his place, discouraging the people in their unreasonable demands for power. The Swiss minister had lost control, and the King was impatient to

take charge himself. On the 11th of July, the messenger arrived to bid Necker leave at once. He was dining when he heard the news, and stayed comfortably enough to end his meal. Much wine was drunk before he started out, but there was no time for him to take leave. The royal command was unmistakable and it had to be obeyed.

The minister drove with all speed to Brussels, and meditated upon the fickle nature of the Queen. She would attempt to rule, but the people would not let themselves be ruled. Necker remembered the slight to his daughter at the court and the ominous words which had been spoken when Madame de Stäel rejoiced to see the Three Estates pass by.

" Great troubles will come from all this for France and for us." It was Madame de Montmorin who spoke, and her prophecy should be remembered well. She died on the scaffold, where her son died too. Dr Guillotin had walked before her, the grave deputy of Paris, with a name never to be freed from thoughts of horror, since it became

attached to the instrument which afterwards cut off so many heads. He was chiefly concerned with the ventilation of the Great Hall, where the National Assembly had met in 1789. He was a humane man, ever anxious to preserve the health of all and to make death more merciful.

With Necker beyond the frontier, there was new hope in Marie Antoinette, now free to choose her own creatures to fight against the mob. But Paris became violent when the news spread that their minister had been dismissed.

Camille Desmoulins, a young student, rose and flung all prudence to the winds as he harangued the crowd from a favourite meeting-place. His gipsy face and long black hair inspired others with the same frenzy as he spoke of the "St Bartholomew's bell of patriots," which had now been rung. The Swiss and German mercenaries would come and kill the French by order of the Queen, who had sent their minister away. There was no time to lose if they intended to save themselves. Let all wear a green

cockade, for green was the colour of eternal hope, and the trees could furnish leaves abundantly.

Swayed by the orator, the listeners did his will. The cry "To Arms!" was given as Camille held two pistols high above his head. A multitude of eager men then rushed through Paris and seized the busts of Necker and of Orleans, whom they believed to be the People's Friend. They bore these through the streets in triumph, and clamoured for weapons of defence.

There was a store of weapons in the *Invalides*, which was captured by the mob, and powder, being brought down the Seine and intended for the other troops, was intercepted by the patriots burning with new military zeal. New cockades were manufactured—the red and blue of Paris on a white ground—the famous "tricolour," and these were worn instead of green.

On the 14th of July 1789 the Bastille, that stronghold of the State, was stormed by the people as their first act of violence. They exulted when they saw it fall—tyranny

The Arch of Steel
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was defied and the cruelties of many years exposed by the half-dazed prisoners they led through the crowded streets. The key was sent to General Washington, who rejoiced that the national independence of France would soon be won. The deed rang through Europe and through the whole world afterward. A new era was beginning. "It is a revolt," Louis exclaimed, awakened from his sleep that night. "Sire, it is not a revolt—it is a Revolution," one replied.

The King went to Paris on July 17th, entering the capital under the protection of the National Militia with Lafayette at their head. He had to pin the tricolour cockade upon his breast and mount the Town Hall steps beneath the arch of steel formed by the drawn swords of the citizens.

Necker was recalled, and Artois fled with many another who had advised the Queen. Old Abbé Vermond was with the first emigrants who sought shelter in a foreign land—Enghien and Condé, princes of the blood. The Comtesse de Polignac parted with tears from the mistress whose danger she would

have shared. "Good-bye, dearest of my friends; it is a dreadful and a necessary word. Good-bye!" So read the note which proved the passionate love that would send a beloved companion to safety. Marie Antoinette had wept as she wrote this, and thought of Trianon and youth and all the vanished pleasures of her world.

CHAPTER XII: *"The King to Paris!"*

WHILE the National Assembly debated the affairs of State there were children starving in Saint Antoine, that poor quarter of the town where nearly all the women had to work. In humble stalls and shops there was much talk of bread or the lack of it. The washerwomen found that they could utter plaints quite freely with other women knitting at their doors, but the summer wore away and brought no better fortune to their homes. Then came the story of a great banquet at Versailles given to the regiment of Flanders by the Gentlemen of the Guard.

Each soldier had been presented with two bottles of wine and the daintiest fare that could be provided by the State for the guests of royalty. The dinner had begun quite early in the afternoon, and was still being served when the King returned from hunting in the woods. He had gone to the Opera House where the banquet was toward and the Queen had gone with him, holding aloft

the Dauphin in her arms. The whole company had risen at the sight, and the band had played "O Richard, O my King," till many a patriot had been maddened by the strains and sworn loyalty there and then. White cockades, thrown by fair women from the boxes, had been seized by the regiments. The Austrian favours too were donned, and women's faces darkened when they spoke of this. It must have been the Queen's beauty which had won over men, otherwise good citizens enough. On a September evening that regiment of Flanders, famous in song for ragged clothing and light loves, had been entertained. It was in October that a woman, bolder than the rest, led the way to Versailles to have audience with the King.

The Assembly met at Versailles still, but there was solemn conclave in the Town-Hall of Paris, visited by the band of women who had left Saint Antoine and its gossip to bear themselves like men. Bailly, the new Mayor, was too fond of words. It was their part to act and show the King how hard life had become.

There would have been lawlessness along the twelve miles' march if Maillard had not led the women and maintained some discipline. He was out of place among the motley crowd of enraged women, being a stiff man neatly dressed in black. Drums beat wildly, and more than one fine lady was made to walk in step, dragged from her carriage to join them in walking through the mud. Hunger suggested robbery of the bakers' shops when the town of Sèvres was reached, but Maillard checked the women and paid for all the food they seized. His control only ceased when Versailles excited them to riotous deeds. The National Assembly rose indignant to behold a disordered mass of weary figures clamouring to be heard.

"Not so much speaking. Give us bread." The audacity tried the patience of the President, whose chair was taken by a burly fishwife who resisted all attempts to turn her out. He was thankful to see a deputation march to the palace, led by the prettiest—Louison Chabray. These came back well

satisfied with their visit, for Louis had promised all they asked, and kissed the trembling spokeswoman on the cheek. There was some doubt expressed that he might not keep his word, but most of the party settled down by camp fires, devouring food and oblivious of wind and rain.

Within the palace Marie Antoinette lay upon soft pillows in the luxurious chamber where she never slept again. She had been summoned from Trianon by the news of the menacing crowd about the palace gates, and had entered the King's Council, full of anxious fears. Louis had been shooting when the strange procession came.

In the stillness of the night one of the Queen's women wakened her and bade her fly to the King's room that she might be safe. There were ominous sounds at Versailles, where the people wandered, seeking the object of their hate—the "Austrian." The cry of "Save the Queen!" had been uttered by a guard, who defended the Queen's door and risked his life.

Wrapped in a shawl, Marie Antoinette

fled along the echoing passages to the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, where the Royal Family had assembled, barricading the entrance with furniture piled high. There were men in the palace determined to pierce her body with their pikes. They could be heard in the distance crying out as they stabbed the bed where she had lain. All those about the Queen marvelled to see her calm, even when she realized the meaning of the cries outside.

Lafayette arrived in panic, fearing peril to the Royal Family, now in his care. He had slept through utter weariness on the night of the attack, and realized when he saw the palace that his sleep had cost him dear. The angry crowd was without the windows, demanding that the Queen should show herself. He begged that she would gratify the people's wish, and knelt to pay her homage as they gazed at her. Harm might have come to her if his chivalry had not made its appeal. The royal children had been sent within, while more than one threatening weapon was pointed at the Queen, who faced the mob alone.

The King must come to Paris. They would have their King. Louis yielded, realizing that his Guards had been made prisoners, his palace had been invaded by the mob. He took his place silently in the great carriage when it was brought for him. Marie Antoinette sat by him, and the two children, with the royal governess, Madame de Tourzel, were in the carriage too. The Princesse Elizabeth had dressed herself in haste to accompany the party which was reluctant to leave Versailles, the scene of former pleasures. She knew that the King was doing what his people wished.

The carriage went slowly along the road that bright October afternoon, when the autumn foliage was hardly stirred by a breeze. The women who had marched so boldly were now tired, and gave shrill utterance to their pain as they tramped the twelve miles with their captives, and now and again a musket was discharged, startling the unhappy Queen.

From the place where she sat she could see two pikes surmounted by the heads of

Guardsmen who had died to save her; curses assailed her name, but she did not blench. She longed secretly for the journey's end as twilight came and they passed the city gates. Sixty wagons of flour rolled through with the royal carriage—a fine prize.

A ceremony took place at the entrance to the capital, where Mayor Bailly made clumsy speeches to the conquered King. How unnecessary, it seemed, to prate of Henri Quatre when the children were so tired and they all needed food!

It would give the citizens great pleasure —so said Bailly—to see the Royal Family in the Town-Hall before they entered the Tuileries, and it was nearly ten o'clock before the palace could be reached. The short drive from Versailles had occupied eight hours.

CHAPTER XIII: *In the Tuileries*

THE ancient palace of the kings of France had been cleared, perforce, of all that train of royal pensioners who had begun to look upon it as their own. It was long since it had sheltered those of royal blood. Catherine de Medici had lived there once. Now it was the haunt of shabby artists and poor gentlewomen, retired officials, actors, and a swarm of parasites. At first, permission to live within the Tuileries had been hard to gain. Court functionaries pleaded the expense of life in Paris where they had to live; then painters, sheltered in the Louvre, made their way within the walls where there was still much empty space. Petitions flowed in later and met with a kind reception from indolent dwellers at Versailles, who did not think of Paris as the residence of the court.

There was a church within the walls so that the little colony might hold private Mass. There were shops set up within the enclosure too. Theatres provided for the entertainment of citizens sheltered by the bounty of

Louis XVI. There were many discomforts in times of excessive heat and cold, for the rooms were ill-ventilated and very badly built. An occupant might faint in summer owing to the oppressive atmosphere, and in winter sit and shiver in the cruel draughts, cursing the arrangement by which his neighbours passed through his kitchen or dining-room to reach their own abode. Though they had grumbled previously, the tenants of the Tuileries realized their privileges, as men will, when an order came through the King's architect, M. Mique, that the palace was to be made ready for the King. The whole colony was bundled out, pacified by promises of recompense; workmen were summoned in hot haste, and the sixth of October saw the Royal Family installed.

The little Dauphin had been accustomed to a suite of rooms, furnished with due luxury, and he was inclined to be peevish when he saw his bed, set in the middle of a vast apartment, open on all sides, with doors barricaded because they would not shut. Marie Antoinette reminded him that they had done well enough for Louis XIV, the

proudest of the Bourbon kings, and the boy slept at last, without a guard, but his new governess watched by him though tired out.

The Queen received the brave soldier of the Guard who had saved her life on the evening of October 5th. She could not forget Miomandre de Sainte-Marie, who had been wounded at her door, nor his chivalrous companion, Tardivet du Repaire. She learned that Paris had insulted Miomandre and she sent for him, speaking words so gracious that the soldier would have died for her. The King stood by her side, grateful but ill-at-ease. He could find no words to express the admiration that he felt. The Queen excused his silence, but she began to despair of him, for he was always unready in a crisis. He might have acted promptly and fled before they were exposed to the humiliations of virtual imprisonment in the Tuileries.

The faithful guard had been so treated that it was judged wise to send him out of Paris, where he would be safe. Marie Antoinette would fain have followed him, for she hated to be among her subjects now. The lowest could

pry into the details of her private life, and insist on speech with her. These French women, jealous of her grace, climbed to her very windows and watched her toilet with greedy eyes. Paris was determined to make a show of the King and Queen whom they had seized. A crowd pressed constantly about the Tuileries, which was overlooked by other buildings of the town. It had been hard to submit to dinners in public at Versailles in days when pleasant Trianon could always be considered a retreat: It was very hard now to walk abroad, gaped at by Parisians, gloating over the royal possession they had in their hands. The Tuileries was very like a prison in these days.

The Queen had been exhausted by having to oppose the violence which had prompted the attempt upon her life. She worked at her tapestry and read with her daughter, the pious Madame Royale. They were fond of books of devotion since the Princess had attended her first Communion. Henceforth, it was said, there was something new to be observed in Marie Antoinette. She found comfort for her sore troubles in attending

the services of her Church. She was almost as serene as the young sister of the King, Elizabeth, whose name is reverenced still.

The King could not hunt, and he felt the need of all that physical exercise which had filled his early years. He missed the glorious woods surrounding Versailles and the royal chase. Striding up and down the rooms where he was now confined, he hated the sight of streets crowded always by a noisy mob. He was accustomed to days of comparative solitude far from the business of the world. He had not even a workshop here where he could busy himself in making locks. He used a file sometimes when he did not care to read devotional books or the *History of Charles I.* The story of that unhappy monarch had a fascination for the Bourbon kings. Meanwhile, in the Riding School near by, Guillotin was insisting that death should give no privileges to rank, and was urging decapitation by means of a new machine. Louis took a keen interest in these debates, and suggested an improvement in the construction of the knife which was to strike off so many heads. The Doctor was

quite infatuated by the humane means of inflicting death. "We cannot make too much haste, gentlemen," he urged, "to allow the nation to enjoy this advantage." Some of his companions in the National Assembly laughed, while others were shocked, at the details he gave of the machine. All were soon to be but too familiar with it.

The Dauphin became reconciled to the hardships of removal from Versailles, for he had a little garden of his own in the palace grounds and used to dig there, to the admiration of the fickle crowd. The pretty, fair-haired child won many hearts by running to shake hands with any citizen who desired the honour of being greeted by the future king. Louis XVI had been declared "King of the French" instead of "King of France and Navarre," but Louis' son had no idea that the change could mean anything to him. He thought the people kind, for they cheered lustily to see him in the uniform of the National Guard in miniature, and brought their own little boys to be drilled. It was better fun to be a colonel of troops in the gardens of the Tuileries than to run

about the park of Versailles with a governess who was not nearly so indulgent as the King.

Paris was amused by the new spectacle but discontented with the results of that October day. "The Baker, the Baker's Wife and the Little Apprentice" had been captured with the wagon-loads of flour, and still there was not bread to eat. Sheer ferocity made the mob seize an honest baker, François by name, on the ground that he had kept loaves from the hungry, though the unhappy wretch had been most ready to supply the food. He was dragged *à la lanterne* from the hands of the National Guard who would have saved his life. After he was hanged, his head was carried on a pike for every baker to kiss who chanced to meet the crowd. The practice of taking law into their own hands had begun with the trial of Foulon, an oppressor of the people who had bidden them eat grass. Foulon's head, its mouth stuffed derisively with the provender he had thought good enough for the poor, had flouted the authority of Lafayette. This time the leader demanded martial law that such rioting might be checked. It was

Aristocrats, 1790 132
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granted by the National Assembly upon the condition that a red flag must be flown from the chief window of the Town Hall and carried before the troops sent to disperse the mob.

While the people starved and wreaked their vengeance on any unlucky offender they could seize and kill, there was sullen wrath at the sight of the train of attendants thought necessary by the court. The Royal Family might be prisoners but they fared sumptuously at meals. Many servants were lodged in the Tuileries, while others boarded out, scorning the citizens who did not understand how to order functions as splendid as those at Versailles. The Queen had her own German baker still, and special medical attendants, as had the King, the Dauphin and Madame Elizabeth. These had their lackeys, too, and Paris marvelled at the resplendent suites. Marie Antoinette's unpopularity had increased since the publication of a book which recounted the frivolities of her early years. Extravagance could be cited still, and arrogance which would not let her lead the simple life of a loyal "citoyenne."

In February, 1790, Joseph of Austria died and

was succeeded by his brother Leopold. There was a plan of escape which enabled Marie Antoinette to endure the raucous cries which reached her even from the cafés of the Palais Royal, the haunts of oratory in these revolutionary times. A passion for speeches and for written words had come upon France with the increased opportunities of hearing what the National Assembly was doing in the Riding School. The Duc d'Orléans had left Paris, but he had many creatures there. The sound of their eloquence reached the Queen, who knew that attacks on her reputation poured from the press. The newspapers varied in their politics, but they were seldom loyal in tone. If they reported the death of a noble at the hands of the mob, the news was joyfully set forth, since it was the fashion to hate aristocrats. No wonder the Queen was glad to retire with her children to Saint-Cloud in the summer of 1790.

An immense crowd gathered to see that the royal captives should not free themselves. The journey out from Paris was rendered ignominious by the escort of the National Guard.

CHAPTER XIV: *The Meeting at Saint-Cloud*

THERE was but one man who might avail to save the tottering throne of France—Gabriel Honoré Riquetti de Mirabeau, most famous of the Third Estate. He ruled the National Assembly by his powerful voice. There were rumours that he might desert the popular cause and adopt that of the royal party in the end. He had been heard to say that Marie Antoinette was " the only man " Louis had about him now. Maria Theresa's daughter had a regal spirit still. Yet it was with reluctance that she gave consent to meet " the monster " in a secret conclave at Saint-Cloud. She had dreaded his coarse countenance since the terrors of that October night at Versailles, blaming him for the outrage that had seared her very soul.

Mirabeau divined her dread, but still he pressed desperately for the interview. The Comte de la Marck was prevailed upon to arrange a meeting with the Queen. Mirabeau's nephew rode out with him from Paris, and

at the postern gate a few grave words were spoken and the younger horseman rode off with a note to the National Assembly to be given them if the other did not reappear. The giant had lived through evil days, and the thought of assassination haunted him. But he braced himself and passed into the park, hoping that the power he loved might be his at last. He was poor, and dreamed of gold, poured forth at his desire. He was talented and ambitious, and prisons had held him often within their walls. He saw himself chief Minister of France with Marie Antoinette as Regent for her son. Poor, helpless Louis was not in his mind as he stood within the palace and held audience with the Queen.

Marie Antoinette let "the monster" kiss her hand, half-scornful of his ease. She believed his promises, and promised, in her turn, that she would work with him for the Bourbon throne. Her son's heritage must not be lost though she had to defend and save it with the help of foreign soldiers who would shed the blood of French citizens. Bouillé, the old Royalist general, had his camp at

Montmédy, and was ready to crush the malcontents. The Queen would not listen to any plan of Mirabeau that did not tally with this scheme.

In imagination, the leader of the National Assembly began to see Maria Theresa's daughter leading out her troops against Paris from some "near and loyal town." He was disappointed when he heard her say that she would not leave the capital without the King. He knew that it would be impossible soon for the Royal Family to take any step without the sanction of their zealous captors. The flight of the King's aunts from Versailles had been followed by a riot. *Loque* and *Graille* were old women now, trembling at the strange violence of the times. They would have taken the Dauphin to Rome with them if the Queen would have consented to part with her little son. It was well for the princesses that they crossed the frontier before the populace could insist on their return. As it was, the Versailles women kept their boxes at the palace and tumbled their possessions out on to the ground.

Loque and *Graille* were thankful enough to reach their destination safely, and bore the loss with almost a sense of gratitude to the captors since their lives were spared. Marie Antoinette was not warned by the incident, for she had her *nécessaire* made ready, a costly ivory box containing all the requisites for a toilette in the old court days.

Mirabeau, still playing a double game, knew that treason was whispered in connexion with his name as it passed from one to another in the capital. Yet he continued to intrigue, sending many letters to the Queen. He found that his irreligion was displeasing to Marie Antoinette, who had become a devout Catholic of late. Yet they had one quality in common which helped them in their alliance—a disdain of the masses and a certain loftiness of mind that would enable them to take action, however dear it cost.

In the National Assembly, the mighty voice of Mirabeau was still swaying the enemies of the Queen. He spoke constantly in their debates, for he felt that his strength was declining and that his body would fail

long before his mind. "Take me out of this," he said after his last speech; the people were thronging eagerly about him in the gardens of the Tuileries. The news spread then that Mirabeau was dying, and the city mourned. Guilty of treason he had certainly been, but the influence of his dominating personality would make him sorely missed.

He met death courageously, though he would fain have lived a few years longer to complete his tasks. He was without religion and would not be confessed.

A great cry arose when the doctors came from his room. There had not been such lamentation since the death of Louis XII. Those who would have danced that night were threatened by the weeping mob. The theatres closed, and all carriages drove slowly through the streets. "Fine weather, but Mirabeau is dead," they said in Paris, on the following morn.

A hundred thousand mourners followed Mirabeau's coffin to the grave. The National Guards were there and ministers of the King. Side by side with these were the members of

the National Assembly and the Jacobin Club. Mirabeau lay in the Pantheon, the last resting-place of the greatest ones of France, honoured by men of every rank. No such respect had followed Louis XV, nor would be paid to Louis XVI at his death.

The French monarchy was lost henceforth, though the Queen had desperate hopes, and her energy was bent on effecting an escape from Paris. There had been talk of the Royal Family leaving the Tuileries for a whole year at least. She was tired of the vacillation and inactivity of the King. She looked for an ally and found Count Axel de Fersen, whose love still endured. He had been waiting to do her service since that first encounter long ago when they were boy and girl. It was for him to run the risks that must necessarily attend an enemy of the people who took from them the prize they held—the royal captives of the Tuileries.

CHAPTER XV: *The Queen's Ring*

FERSEN busied himself with certain orders for a great lady, named the Baroness de Korff, who was making a long journey and had need of a new coach. Five attendants would go with her and two others would follow in a small chaise.

The Swedish noble, it was rumoured, was about to leave the court, but the King and Queen would stay in Paris until after Corpus Christi day.

On the 20th of June 1791, Fersen drove through Paris in a strange disguise, waiting apparently for some fares to fill his coach. A tall, hooded lady stepped into the Rue de l'Echelle with two children closely muffled. No sentry stopped the royal governess and her charge, whom Fersen greeted with respect, for Madame de Tourzel was none other than his so-called mistress, the Baroness de Korff. It was eleven o'clock and others were retiring from the King's *couchée* just performed. A second lady took her place beside the first, and then a short, stout man appeared in a

peruke and round hat that seemed to mark him as a servant of some sort. But it was Louis XVI who greeted his young sister with inquiries for his wife. They were uneasy as an hour passed by and Fersen jested with other coachmen of the Paris streets, drinking and taking snuff with them, while his heart beat fast with fears for Marie Antoinette's safety on this fateful night.

As the clocks struck midnight, a lady in a gipsy-hat came hurrying to the coach. She had lost her way, being unfamiliar with the Paris streets, and had seen Lafayette's carriage pass. There was talk of pursuit as the Queen stepped into the hired coach. Fersen drove off furiously, realizing how much time had now been lost. Every moment was precious that carried the royal party on their way before the people awoke to the fact that they were gone. In the Rue de Clichy the coachman had to stop and ask, "Did Count Fersen's coachman get the Baroness de Korff's new *berline*?" "Gone with it an hour ago," they said, and the driver whipped his horses to their utmost speed.

Passing the Barrier de Clichy, Fersen saw at last the great *berline* with six horses and his own German coachman holding them. He drew up and helped the sleepy children to alight. The Queen and the royal governess had reversed their ranks. It was Madame de Tourzel who stepped out first and took her place in the more comfortable *berline*. The King and Madame Elizabeth followed her, and last came Marie Antoinette, in gipsy-hat and plain grey gown that would not burden her too heavily on that summer's day, the 21st of June. Other robes were in the band-boxes, at Bondy, where they should find the chaise and waiting-maids. New clothes had been ordered for the journey as though it were a bridal march.

They reached Bondy at dawn, and hope seemed to beckon them to the east, where Bouillé waited with the army that would take Paris and give it to its King again. The chaise was there and postilions with noisy whips to take the loyal Fersen's place and drive the Queen to safety and a happier life.

The farewell was short between the two, destined to meet but once again, though nineteen years should pass before the Swedish hero would forget his love in his last sleep. As he turned to Bourget and the Brussels road he wore a ring the Queen had slipped into his hand when he came to the carriage window and spoke some words to her.

That ring was still on Fersen's hand at Stockholm when he met his death. It was on another 20th of June that he fell, defending himself gallantly from the populace who hated him. Though love of life had ended for him long before, he drew his sword and flashed the ring upon his hand that Marie Antoinette had given him. The ignorant said it had some supernatural power of bringing death with it, and, after Fersen's death, they cut the finger from his hand and flung it with the ring into the stream. But the traitor who did this deed had to restore the jewel in strange circumstances, and it shone upon Fersen's coffin before they put him in the tomb, though the grave-diggers

would not bury it, fearing that madness or some other evil curse would come upon them unless the jewel shone where its light was not obscured.

There was ease within the carriage which Fersen's care had built for the use and comfort of the Queen. She thought of him as she leaned back upon white velvet cushions, and hoped that it would soon be in her power to reward his devotion. She rehearsed her part gaily with de Tourzel and the rest. It would not be hard to assume the duties of royal governess to the children she passionately loved, and she had the prudence not to show herself at Meaux, the little town where the *berline* halted for relays. The horses were fatigued by the heavy burden they had drawn so far. It was seventy miles to Châlons, the next large town, where rumours of the flight might come from Paris at any time.

Through the pleasant summer day they ate and drank, and were shaded from the excessive sun by green blinds that had been ordered for the fastidious Baroness de Korff.

At Viels-Maisons, one Picard, a postilion, recognized the King.

Louis felt himself secure now that he was fifty miles from Paris and driving quickly to the royal camp. He said some foolish words when one of his attendants remonstrated with him as he talked to the poor peasants they met along the road. He did not fear discovery at Chaintry, where, however, a travelled man recognized the Royal Family and, unlike Picard, did not hold his tongue. Louis gave lavish presents at the inn, and entered Châlons, unconscious that the news had travelled fast along the road.

None detained the fugitives at Châlons and they felt confident of meeting the first soldiery from Bouillé's camp at Somme-Vesle, a deserted spot whence they could travel to Montmédy through Varennes. It had been arranged that the *berline* should reach the stables at Somme-Vesle at one o'clock, but the delays had kept them on the road till after five and, when the travellers looked from their windows, they found no soldiers at the posting-house. A body of Hussars, under

Choiseul, had been there at three and, fearing to arouse suspicion if they waited long, had left the place not half an hour before the *berline* began to drive up the hill which hid the soldiery from sight.

CHAPTER XVI: *The Pursuit*

THEY reached Ste Menehould as the sun set and men were returning from the fields to the little town, where the arrival of a fine carriage caused a pleasant stir. The Queen looked out of the windows and was saluted by some soldiers as a young ex-dragoon sauntered past. This was Drouet, the post-master, whose father had provided horses for the next stages of the journey.

Drouet knew the Queen, suspected flight, and readily undertook to ride hard after the royal fugitives when the Town Hall had held its meeting, and had resolved on the one action which might yet save France. He took, as companion with him, Guillaume, an inn-keeper of the town. They were both accustomed to the saddle, and knew that stretch of country far better than the occupants of the heavy coach which drove swiftly to Varennes.

Drouet thought that Metz was the goal at which the King was aiming. He stopped his

postilions as they returned along the road and learned that orders had been given for a new route to be followed. It was now his intention to enter Varennes first and give warning to the people of that town that they must prevent the coach and its occupants from leaving.

Hard and fast the horsemen rode, taking the high road above the plain where they could see sometimes a speck vanishing before them through the shadows of the night. The fate of France hung upon their efforts. Let Louis once reach Bouillé and his camp and the new work of Revolution would be at an end. Austria must cross the frontier then and crush the nation which had grown to hate the black cockade. It mattered not that horses panted and strained nerves seemed near breaking-point. The race was one for men of mettle, and it was a proud moment for Guillaume, at least, when he crossed the bridge into the silent town and saw that the *berline* had not yet climbed the hill which led to the main street. The bridge was held, the carriage stopped, and the imperious voice

of Marie Antoinette was heard, calling upon the outriders to proceed. Drouet took command then ; he spoke roundly of treason to those among the townsfolk who would have suffered the Royal Family to escape.

The fugitives were taken to the inn, where they spent a sleepless, weary night, hoping for the daylight and the welcome sight of Choiseul's brave Hussars. These came, but not till ten thousand armed men had assembled at Varennes and were clamouring eagerly for a return to Paris. By seven o'clock the *berline* bore its occupants back in the direction of the capital.

Louis had been resolved on flight till a message came from the National Assembly ordering his surrender. When he had read the document, he was willing to submit, but Marie Antoinette flung the paper down and trampled upon it in a rage.

At ten o'clock the news was brought to the Riding School in Paris—" The King is taken ! " The man who carried it had a ride of eighteen hours, passing the captives in his furious haste and leaving them to chafe

at the tedium of their own journey. How cramped the limbs were which had been at ease on velvet cushions during that first day of flight.

A crowd shrieked around the *berline* as they neared each town, and the travellers thought of Paris as a refuge when they seemed so perilously near death. Barnave and Pétion had been sent by the National Assembly to see that all due precautions were taken in guarding against escape. The carriage was overcrowded, therefore, and the Queen had to put the little Dauphin on her lap, while Madame Royale stood upright before her aunt. The ladies were a sorry spectacle by this time, for they had lost their sleep at night and endured long agonies from insults and fear of violence from the mob.

The Queen won the heart of Barnave by her grace, talking with him privately at some stopping-place and encouraging her children to make friends with him. This man proved loyal and devoted, suffering for his courage at the last. It raised Marie Antoinette's spirits to see the honest admiration in his

eyes in spite of her torn garments, as she flattered him.

The heat was intense, and it was not pleasant to eat and drink within the narrow space which held them all. Pétion became offensive in his manners, and was jocular with the Princess Elizabeth because she deigned to pour out wine for him. He did not understand her motives when she sought to win his favour by gentle, kindly words: indeed he made her suffer torture, for she looked in vain to Louis for protection from such slights.

The King was apparently unconscious of his sister's shrinking from the insolence of the Deputy. He slumbered as they drove along the dusty summer roads, and was not ill-pleased to approach the barriers of Paris on the western side. It was Saturday night and nearly a whole week since he had left the Tuileries.

The carriage passed the barrier, while a strange silence fell upon the mob. The soldiers who lined the way reversed arms, as they were accustomed to do for the burial of the dead. It was a solemn home-coming,

but the Queen was not warned by the events of the past week. She still expected to be rescued by foreign aid. She wrote to Fersen, urging him not to come back again, and she appealed to her brother in Austria. Her demand was for an International Congress now.

Those who had fled the country earlier, joined the Allies, intending to march on France. In the spring of 1792 the Queen knew definitely that they would fight for her. She thought that Austria and Prussia would make short work of an undisciplined army raised by the disloyal citizens. Fate seemed against her when her brother Leopold died, but she thought there would not be a long delay before the white Austrian uniforms showed themselves victoriously in the Paris streets and brought back the sense of triumph to her heart. For yet a little while longer she must furnish a spectacle to the clamorous Parisian mob. And she was compelled to crown her son with the scarlet cap of liberty — the symbol of the people she despised.

CHAPTER XVII: "*The Steeples at Midnight*"

THE flight to Varennes had brought contempt upon the King and Queen that made their sojourn in the Tuileries a time of sore-felt shame to them. One day the people of Paris pressed into the palace—it was the 20th of June again. Over thirty thousand had been marching through the town, singing "*Ça ira*" as they went along. Louis invited them to enter the Tuileries and, protected by a guard, seated himself upon a table. He drank wine when it was offered him, and placed the red cap of liberty upon his head that the throng outside the door might see his patriotism. They thought him courageous, but in Marie Antoinette's opinion he was degraded by such familiarity with the subjects of his realm.

Behind a barricade of furniture the Queen sat with Princess Elizabeth. Both were alarmed for the safety of the royal children till Pétion, now Mayor of Paris, came, as evening fell, and rid the palace of the ragged band that had invaded it. But the red cap

was passed to her before the crowd retired, and she accepted it. Later, she wept to feel her world upset and all the chivalry fled from France. She had obeyed the rebels and pledged her son to them.

Fiercely the "Austrian" looked toward the frontiers whence revenge would come to satisfy her pride. Without scruple she urged the King not to keep faith with subjects who wished to rule themselves. She counselled him to accept decrees that took away his powers. Meantime, she worked for an invasion of Paris by the Allied troops. She had seen Fersen and made a second plan for flight, but that, too, had been futile, and Fersen, going to Sweden to gain help, was greeted by the awful news that his King, Gustavus III, had been shot at a masked ball at Stockholm, in the prime of life.

Paris was roused by rumours that their city would be destroyed by fire and sword if any one of the Royal Family in the Tuileries were harmed. The Duke of Brunswick threatened it, inspired, no doubt, by Marie Antoinette, who longed for vengeance and

the restoration of the authority of the Crown. Insults would be wiped out in blood when the invaders came. Only by believing this could she endure the sight of Louis submitting always to the people's whims.

The Tuileries was defended by a mighty body-guard of Swiss, all valiant fighting men who would give their lives for any cause which they upheld. Mercenaries they might be, but they were faithful in the earning of their wage. Discipline made them staunch to Royalty, if patriotism were but a name. They filled the mighty palace with a sense of power. The Queen exulted when she saw them standing upright at the doors. The populace would fall back in panic on encountering soldiers. They who thronged the Paris streets were but a pack of cowards.

The country was declared in danger when Brunswick was known to be about to march. He had a goodly army of Allies who would espouse the cause of Marie Antoinette. Eighty thousand—Prussians, Hessians, and Emigrants from the French nobility—were mustered in a fell array. There was confusion

in Paris, where all patriots were determined to resist Brunswick. Bold Barbaroux, Deputy for Marseilles, made a desperate appeal to his townsfolk to set out to the capital and show the invading force that the people of France would die for liberty.

Six hundred men answered the appeal and marched to Paris to the tune of the martial hymn which was to be sung upon so many battle-fields. They were welcomed enthusiastically as they neared their journey's end. Patriots came out to meet them and bade them sup merrily that night. They entered Paris publicly on the 30th of July, to be embraced by Mayor Pétion and fêted by the citizens.

The National Assembly discussed helplessly whether the King should be forced to abdicate or not. Their debates were interrupted by petitioners who had scant patience with the tardy action of the legislature. Pétion, with the Municipality, petitioned for the King's forfeiture, and wore the tricolour openly when they came with this request. If forfeiture were not pronounced by the National

Assembly on August 9th, the people began to murmur that they would pronounce it themselves.

The Marseillais were in barracks ; they had ammunition now. Insurrection could not be put off much longer when these men of the South were preparing to meet death. The 9th of August 1792 saw them roused to act.

The Tuileries had been warned of ominous preparations for attack, and courtiers listened at the palace windows for the signal that would call the patriots to arms. The Swiss stood in gallant order when the hour of midnight came, and thought of the Eve of St Bartholomew when they heard the sound of bells.

A king had ordered the bells to ring in 1572, and had planned the death of subjects who were his guests that day. It was the order of the people that filled the air with sounds on the fateful 9th of August, before the day which was to see the storming of the palace of the king.

From steeple to steeple the alarm rang out, the peal of St Anthony, the tocsin of St John.

From the Cathedral and the Abbey Tower the booming echoed. The Queen heard the sounds from her window and remained there to watch the rising of the sun. The Princess Elizabeth joined her, and the Dauphin was roused from childish slumbers. The two women knew that the bells had been the signal for a desperate move against the royal prerogative. They could not sleep while they were so uncertain what the day would bring.

At daybreak the Queen went to her husband and bade him show himself to the men who would defend the palace at the danger of their lives. Louis obeyed; he was tired and dishevelled, and wore an unbecoming violet coat; and as he passed down the line of soldiers, the red-coated Swiss paid little homage to the Bourbon King. They were loyal and would fight against his enemies, but they were not roused to enthusiasm by the review which the Queen had so eagerly advised.

As soon as the 10th of August came, the mob swarmed into the courts before the

Tuileries. Those within the building held their muskets ready to discharge, but the Marseillais had not arrived as yet, and there was time for the King and Queen to hasten to the Riding School, where the National Assembly held debate.

The Royal Family were seated in a kind of box high above the level of the floor that they might not take part in any business that was done. The children became very restless as the day wore on, and the King and Queen listened sadly to the sounds of a fierce assault on the palace they had left.

The assault had become a massacre of the defending force when the brave Swiss leader gave the order to retreat. He had received a message from King Louis that his men should lay down their arms, but he would not convey it till he knew that the royal cause was doomed. By ten o'clock the fight was over and the Tuileries in the possession of the mob.

Louis XVI sat patiently to hear that the Capet kings had fallen from their high estate. It was made clear to him that he was a State prisoner and would be lodged, henceforth, in

the Temple Tower, which had once been part of Artois' palace. Lights blazed there magnificently as the new occupant entered with his family. The Queen shrank back, remembering the banquets of her headstrong youth and feeling that her first dread of that gloomy building had been justified. The statues of the King in Paris were cast down that day.

CHAPTER XVIII:

September

THE 10th of August had given warning to the Royal Family that the spirit of a fighting nation had been roused by the consciousness that Brunswick's army, when it came, would give no quarter to Parisians. They were hostages now, to be guarded jealously, lest they escaped and joined the enemies of France. A National Convention ruled France in the place of Louis Seize. His very sword was taken away, for he could have no need for weapons in a prison.

The Tuileries had been a palace with appointments not too unlike Versailles, though its great rooms were dreary in the peril of those anxious times; but within the Temple Tower there was real discomfort to be faced and lack of privacy, which rendered each action liable to be construed into an offence by spies. The royal governess and the Princesse de Lamballe had been faithful in adversity, but they were soon removed. "There must be no one here but Capetians,"

the officers declared, and dragged them off by night to a prison less secure.

The King did not feel the pains of privation for he was a simple man, and washed and dressed and prayed as easily in his narrow room as if he had never been accustomed to the *couchée* and the *levée* rites. He had books to read, and gave instruction to his son after the simple breakfast had been served. Similar duties were performed by Marie Antoinette, who had become devout and spent many hours in religious thought, while her young daughter drew or sewed. The whole family was allowed to walk sometimes, chiefly for the Dauphin's sake. The child missed the freedom of his earlier days, and suffered from the horror of too sudden change of life, but his own doctor could not be allowed to visit him, though his mother begged more humbly than she had ever thought to do.

Suspicion became darker as the days passed, and those allied armies were a source of dread. The Royal Guards were changed at stated intervals and varied in their rules.

One man, at least, was kindly,—Hue, who had been the valet of the little boy. He cleaned the tiny rooms now, while the Queen rose early to dress herself and her little son, for the attendance was limited and the women chose to wait upon themselves. At night they sat up often to patch the one coat that Louis had to wear. Their own dresses were few in comparison with former days, but the Dauphin was well supplied by the kindness of an English nobleman's wife. She had heard of his sad plight when the Tuileries was sacked, and sent him the wardrobe of her own child, who was about his age.

The Dauphin seldom spoke of the toys and pleasures of court life. Perhaps his memory was short and he did not remember it. He studied the new map which his father made when France was divided into the new "departments," but he was not allowed to learn arithmetic lest he should be able to use figures for private correspondence with the Royalists outside the Temple walls. Before the end of August, spies were introduced into the prisoners' rooms—one Tison

The Royal Family in the Temple
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and his wife. Hue was removed because he was said to have brought a box of tricolour ribbon into the King's apartments and to have ordered "breeches of Savoyard colour." Savoy was suspected by the patriots of intending to assist the Allies, the ruler being bound by marriage ties with the brother of the Bourbon King. Cléry, a man of equal fidelity, came to act as valet in the place of Hue.

September came, and with it the news that Brunswick was on his way. Hope grew feverish in the heart of Marie Antoinette, and the Royal Family were hurried back to the Temple when they went to walk because those who had charge of them were afraid of the renewed violence of the mob. The report of a victory, gained by Brunswick, maddened all the citizens, closely watching their prey, and they resolved that the King and Queen should pay heavily for the losses inflicted on their subjects by the Allies they had called upon for help.

On September 3rd, a dreadful massacre began by order of the patriot ministers. They were determined that no traitors should

be left in Paris to give secret aid to the invaders on the march. The prisons were full of Royalists, many of them faithful to the Queen. These must be sacrificed to that hatred of the "Austrian" which seized on men anew as they began to fear the power she had evoked. If Brunswick's soldiers should reach Paris, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity would be as they had never been. "We march to meet the enemy but we will not leave brigands behind us to massacre our wives and children" was proclaimed.

There were conspirators among the victims of the "September massacres," but many perished who were innocent of any crime. The Princesse de Lamballe met a ghastly fate because she had wished to share the fortunes of Marie Antoinette when the dark hours came on France. She was cut down by the mob, and her head, elaborately dressed, was placed upon a pike and raised till it appeared before the windows of her friend, the Queen. The other inmates of the Temple would have concealed the gruesome sight, but the Queen saw it and fainted, broken down at last.

Her spirit failed her in that moment and she no longer cared to live.

The tricolour bands of ribbon hung before the Temple as a sign of warning to the mob, but the guardians of the Royal Family feared that those who had killed the Princesse de Lamballe might attempt also to kill the Queen. When the awful work had been done in other prisons, a crier came beneath the Temple walls and proclaimed the deposition of the King. Death had been so near that they were untroubled as to what would be their fate on earth. The King read his book, indifferent that he was now plain Louis Capet, the Queen sewed and did not deign to raise her eyes. Austria and Prussia might arrive in time to save them from the last humiliation, but the pretty face of de Lamballe had not faded from her mind. She shuddered when the end of September made it certain that Paris for the time was victorious in arms. The allied forces of Austria, Prussia, and the Emigrants had failed at Valmy, and henceforth the deposed King was at the mercy of his judges, the people he had tried in vain to rule.

CHAPTER XIX: *The Widow of Capet*

ON September 29th, Louis was separated from his wife and children and lodged in different rooms. He bore the parting patiently, but Marie Antoinette was almost frantic in her grief. She brooded sullenly on the punishment that would fall on the French soldiers when Austria and Prussia had won through to her. She could not believe that undisciplined troops could gain successes in the battle-field. She knew nothing of that victory of Jemappes, where furious valour had been shown by patriots and they had defeated the Allies gallantly.

She was told that the King would be tried before the National Convention, which assembled in the late autumn of 1792. She was indignant that subjects should dare to put her husband on his trial, but unconsciously she now began to fix her hopes upon the Dauphin, clinging more passionately than ever to her children in that lonely Temple life.

She had been dutiful to Louis in her

nobler years, and missed his kindly presence now that friends were gone. In a curious mood of levity she played the popular hymn of the Marseillaise upon a clavecin, for the gaolers were indulgent at odd moments. Communication could take place between the prisoners on their different floors by means of a string which lowered notes or raised them at the prisoner's will. Pens had been removed, but it was easy to prick letters on paper with a pin. The Princess Elizabeth grew very clever at this stratagem.

The trial was speedy. Louis was proved to have intrigued with foreigners against the French, and to have approved of invasion, if it had been allowed to come to pass. He would have defended himself but had scant opportunity of pleading at the bar before which he was arraigned. It had been determined that he should die, and he became resigned to death.

During the sad Christmas-time of 1792, the deposed monarch made his will, a document so touching and so pious that it was read by later generations with reverence. He resigned his soul, with the wife and children

whom he had to leave, to God's care. He forgave his enemies, and impressed upon his son that no vengeance must be taken for his death.

Sentence was pronounced in the first month of 1793, for Louis' entreaties for a respite had been refused although he only wished to make his last confession to a priest. He was allowed to see his family once more before he died. They came down to his rooms and stayed there for two hours. Then Louis sent the children away and promised Marie Antoinette that he would say farewell before he was taken to the scaffold the next day. When she was gone, he spent some time upon his knees and then lay down to take a few hours' sleep.

The Queen awoke in the dull January dawn to hear footsteps pass down the Temple stairs, echoing faintly like the tramp of distant men. She knew that the King had had to go without that last farewell. Cléry came to her with the King's seal and her own wedding-ring. "Tell her that I leave her with difficulty," was the message that he brought.

The scene which crowds of men and women had met to witness was hidden, mercifully,

from the sight of Marie Antoinette. The streets were silent and all shops were shut, while eighty thousand soldiers lined the way by which the carriage passed with Louis Capet, the son of sixty kings. The guillotine had been erected in the Place de la Révolution, once called Place de Louis Seize. Around it were many faces the doomed man might have recognized had he raised his eyes from the book of devotion which he held. "Egalité" Orleans was there; he was the prince of the blood who had voted for the King's death. Santerre, the brewer, directed the rolling of the drums to prevent the King's voice from being heard.

In his puce coat and grey breeches, Louis mounted the scaffold with unfaltering step. He cried to the people that he was innocent, but they were not allowed to hear. He was thirty-eight and had reigned for nearly twenty years.

All was over, the silence of Paris was dispelled for patriots rejoiced freely, not realizing what the world would have to say. Europe was aghast at the work of regicides who had dared to slay their King and destroy the social order. England and Spain declared

war on France, shocked by the principles that had carried Revolution to such a desperate point. Funeral bells tolled in the United States, and public mourning was proclaimed at several courts. Within three weeks a coalition threatened France where a King's head had proved a battle-gage. There were plots to assist the Temple prisoners to escape, and the Dauphin was duly recognized as Louis XVII. The Queen might have fled alone, but she would not leave her children. She had ceased to make plans though she still hoped that her son might come to his own.

The number of spies placed within the prison walls multiplied fast after Dumouriez, the chief general of the new Republic, went over to the Austrian camp. Dumouriez could not force his army to desert with him, but the fact of his treason and the rumour that he intended to march on Paris rendered the men who had put their King to death still more desperate. The Reign of Terror was established, for traitors must be promptly dealt with to save the Republic and its liberties!

Day by day men came to search the Tower

and threaten the women, when they found nothing save an old hat of the King's which his sister kept. Insults were heaped upon the defenceless captives, whose mourning garments might have entitled them to some respect. "I never heard of giving a table or a chair to prisoners," one of the new guards said as he took the young King's seat at dinner, with a brutal laugh. "Straw is quite good enough for them."

The boy grew weaker and was taken from his mother because there were rumours of a conspiracy. The Queen implored that she might still have the care of him, but the men who came to remove him were inexorable. They had received orders to show no mercy, and tore the child from her arms while she stormed and shrieked, losing her self-control lamentably. "What is the good of all this noise?" the harsh officials said.

At length Marie Antoinette resigned herself, putting the boy's hand in that of Simon, the rough shoemaker who was to "make a citizen of a king."

Little Louis XVII was taken to a lower

apartment of the Tower where his mother remained to weep. She had begged very piteously to see him sometimes at meals, but the privilege was refused. She had to peer through a chink in the wall to see him walking on the Tower with his new guardian, who was cruel to him. She was content to wait for hours for the pleasure of this glimpse, though she loathed the *carmagnole* dress they had put on him—the red cap and brown cloth suit which loyal adherents of the Republic wore.

Simon taught "little Capet" to drink and swear strange oaths, and cry "*Vive la République*" in his mother's hearing. He would have made him jest wickedly about the Queen, but the child refused for he was pure at heart. He missed his mother at all times and found it hard to do things for himself, for he had always been accustomed to the tenderest nurture even in the worst of days. "God has forsaken me," Marie Antoinette called out with bitterness when she saw her son for the last time. "I dare not pray any more."

CHAPTER XX: *The Conciergerie*

THE shadow of death crossed the path of Marie Antoinette very soon after she was separated from her son. Paris knew by this time that an invasion by the Allies threatened them. Condé fell and Valenciennes surrendered, so that only Maubeuge was left of the frontier fortresses which blocked the way to the capital. Panic disturbed the riotous braggarts of the wine-shops, and the mob orators spoke wildly of stamping out the members of the Royal Family that remained. The Austrian woman was helpless in their hands and might be made to expiate her crimes upon the scaffold, where heads as proud as hers had been laid down. It was the Reign of Terror, and even the "citoyennes" were eager for the sight of blood. They took their knitting to the chairs, which were arranged before the spectacle of death, and watched each slender aristocratic neck laid bare. A kind of frenzy came upon them when they realized that next week the tide

might turn, sweeping them to destruction too. If Maubeuge fell, the cause of the Austrian was gained.

In August the Queen's trial was discussed, and the Convention issued a decree for her removal from the Temple Tower. Guards awakened her at two o'clock in the morning and read the decree to her. She was unmoved by the words and said nothing in reply. She dressed herself in haste, making a package of the few clothes she was allowed to take. Then in the presence of the officials she gave her daughter into Madame Elizabeth's charge, embracing the two gently and bidding them be brave.

Madame Royale wept, overcome by grief and a premonition that she would lose her mother soon. In profound grief she heard the Queen say drearily as her head struck against the lintel of the door, "Nothing now can hurt me." These were the last words she heard from Marie Antoinette.

The Queen drove through the silent streets and noted sullen faces as she passed. It was

long since she had driven into Paris to be received with cheers. She wondered dully why the world had changed. The discomforts of her new prison mattered little that close August night. She entered it before the dawn, delivered to the gaolers like some common criminal.

The cell which was assigned to the Queen was a damp and dreary room. It had paper, stamped with the royal *fleur-de-lis*, and fine linen on the bed, but the furniture was scanty and the mattress of straw. There were some chairs, and a screen, some four feet high, to protect her from the prying of the passers-by. A window without curtains looked out on the prison yard.

The Queen hung her watch upon a nail and began to undress, fatigued by want of sleep. The porter's wife would have assisted her, but she had learned to do without such help. She lay down on the bed, watched, even in her sleep, by two men and a rough woman.

The next day she asked for linen but it was refused. A week later they brought

some from the Temple, which showed Princess Elizabeth's thoughtfulness, for all the garments sent had been carefully mended. The Queen shed tears as she looked through the clothes, and hid in her bosom a little yellow glove which had been worn by her son.

Imprisonment in the Conciergerie was solitary and weakened Marie Antoinette. She had good food and the special water from Versailles which she had always drunk instead of wine. She had books to read, and could have knitted if they had not refused to bring her needles, fearing suicide. She was driven to work through sheer monotony, and drew the threads of some old tapestry and knit them together with quill tooth-picks when she was tired of *Cook's Voyages* and the stories of adventure that she read.

The Queen's few sympathisers in her fate cursed Coburg, the head of the invading army, because he did not move at once. Fersen, in Brussels, could do nothing though he would have given his life for her. He did not hear the exultant stories of the Paris democrats. The wife of Capet had been brought low,

they said ; she knew the misery of a ragged gown, and had to mend her own shoes unless she was willing to go barefoot in her cell. She looked like a magpie, a fellow-prisoner declared, with her white face and mourning garments. There was no pride left in her. She wept and talked foolishly whenever she chanced to see the gaoler's child. She would have given him her watch if that had not been removed. She had nothing golden left —her very hair was grey. She experienced no kindness save from some pitying woman of the gaol who put flowers upon her table and bought fruit at her request.

Three weeks passed before a ray of hope penetrated the dull walls of the Conciergerie. It was near the end of August when she had visitors within her cell. One was an inspector of police, who put some questions to her, while his companion dropped a bunch of carnations at her feet. There was a note in it, offering to connive at her flight as she was being transferred through the Paris streets to another prison. She had no pens, and her heart beat wildly as she sought for a reply.

While the men on guard were absorbed in their usual game of cards, she pricked with a pin upon a slip of paper. "I am watched; I neither write nor speak; I count on you; I will come."

There were people in the prison who had been bought by those without. The note passed through, and an order was made out for the Queen to be transferred. Treachery laid bare the plot before her deliverers could make it complete. She waited for them one whole day, then knew that they had failed.

The discovery of the "carnation plot" did harm to the hapless Queen as well as to the friends who would have released her from the Conciergerie. She was examined closely and put into another cell. No candle was allowed at night and solitude was forbidden. They put spies everywhere. Even as she washed herself she felt their prying eyes, and grew hot with shame. Her strength failed sadly, but illness did not induce her guardians to move her even to a decent cell.

On the 12th of August the unhappy captive was conducted to a lighted hall

within the prison, where two pale candles shone upon the face of the judge. She was to be tried by the people and without a legal trial. The jury were not peers of Marie Antoinette. Many were men of the working class, and prejudiced. The poor black dress could not conceal her royal descent, but even her proud bearing made them think her guilty of treason to France, for she had Austrian pride.

She was "the daughter of the Cæsars" still, as she bent low to sign her name,—"the widow of Capet," before she was withdrawn again. The trial itself did not take place that night. She was led back to the cell, and told that two barristers had been briefed for her defence. It was to be a mockery, she knew, remembering poor Louis' trial. Long before this she had been doomed, for Europe hoped for the dismemberment of France and had abandoned her.

CHAPTER XXI: *At the Bar*

ON Monday, the 14th of October 1793, Marie Antoinette was formally arraigned before five judges and a jury of fifteen. It was early in the morning that the trial began, but the populace crowded the side galleries of the court and the knitting women had deserted the place where the guillotine then stood to attend also. "See how proud she is!" they cried as the Queen came from the cell, walking between her warders. It seemed long since the Austrian had been a spectacle for all Paris to watch with jealous anger and contempt. Every head bent forward to see what changes had been wrought in her.

She looked older than the thirty-eight years she gave as her age when they began to question her, but her carriage was stately and her voice was clear. A white cap had been placed by the gaoler's wife upon the ashen hair. A lace scarf hung from her shoulders, relieving the black dress, which was limp and shabby from constant wear.

She wore crape in token of her widowed state.

After the first formalities Marie Antoinette sat down. She was so worn by trouble that she found it difficult to endure the searching gaze that Fouquier-Tinville bent on her. The Public Accuser had his salary to earn and would spare none of his victims, hurrying them ruthlessly to the scaffold. He was one of the most dreaded figures of the Reign of Terror—a monster he seemed at the court, yet he was kind to his own household it was said.

The speech against the Queen contained many charges which were true. She had had disloyal relations with the King of Bohemia and Hungary, and she had influenced her husband against his French subjects many times. She had sent French gold to Austria and would have sent more if she could. The follies of her youth were recounted at length, and the shameful story of the necklace did her injury. It had been found difficult, nevertheless, to convict Marie Antoinette before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Simon

the shoemaker was told to threaten the Queen's son to make him sign a document testifying to the guilt of his mother on the cruellest charge that they could bring. The child was dazed with wine and did not understand the words. He scrawled his childish signature to please his captor, not knowing what grave harm he did. Madame Royale was braver and refused to confirm the wicked accusation, though they questioned her with brutality.

Fouquier-Tinville guessed that this charge, so grossly false, would perhaps turn the scale in favour of the Queen, for no reasonable judge could believe that she had been aught but a true mother to her son. She had denied the other accusations steadily. Now that this was read she cried out, " I appeal to every mother here," and stirred hearts that were not too tender by her words. Indignation was roused against her accusers, and her defence became easier from that time. The Queen returned to her cell at three o'clock, carrying some sympathy with her for the ordeal that had lasted several hours.

At five in the evening the trial was resumed. The court was only lit by a few smoky lamps and crowded with the enemies of the Austrian, who wished to see her dragged to ruin. She could barely walk when she was taken back to her cell just before midnight. She was stronger on the morrow because she had slept awhile, and was prepared to face the people in the court.

Latour Dupin, a dashing noble of the Versailles court, was among the witnesses called on this day, the 16th of October. His powdered head and elegant costume brought bygone days painfully before Marie Antoinette.

She listened to his voice eagerly for he spoke in her favour, defending himself, too, with skill. She rejoiced to see how disdainfully he answered the questions put to him. So many of the old order had been brought low that he too might have stooped to save his head. She was glad that he did not avert his eyes from the cold, merciless gaze of Fouquier-Tinville at the judgment bar.

Sitting erect, the Queen became absorbed

in dreams of the life which had passed so gaily that she could not believe how short a time it was since she had figured in it, the frivolous, thoughtless wife. The sordid story of the necklace touched her keenly, as it had always done. She replied scornfully when Herman, the judge, doubted the truth of what she said about that strange affair. She should have resisted, perhaps, when the few beloved treasures were now removed. The miniature of her son was laid before the judge, and locks of hair cut from the heads of the unfortunate children in the Temple, who knew nothing so far of the suffering that their mother had to endure alone.

Witnesses appeared who gave evidence relating to events of later times. The story of the "carnation plot" was told, and other stories of attempts at flight. It could not be denied that the Queen had hoped to be rescued by force of foreign arms, and that she would have given Paris up to vengeance if the Allies had passed the barriers and broken her prison doors. She persisted that she had always obeyed the King instead of leading him, but

her defence was weak. It was made by counsel after Fouquier-Tinville had spoken. At four o'clock in the morning the Queen was told the court's decision on her case.

Marie Antoinette had not hoped for life during the long hours of her trial, and she seemed untouched by fear as the sentence of death was read. She did not answer when the judge asked if she had anything to say. She was quite still, save that her restless fingers played upon the rail in front of her as though she played the music of Mozart. The torches were flickering out when she went through the dreary corridor to her cell and sat down to compose the letter, the writing of which was the last act of her life.

Blotted with tears, the document never reached the Princess Elizabeth, to whom it was addressed. It had something exalted in its wording, for the writer had reached the solemn hour when she saw clearly the uselessness of human strife. Remembering Louis' parting phrase, she exhorted her son not to avenge her death. She commended her children to their aunt, the only companion

of their prison days, and spoke sorrowfully of the friends now gone. Fersen was in her mind, perhaps, and thoughts of the bitter regrets that must assail him when he heard the news.

The priest came to minister to her and found her lying on the bed. She was not asleep, and complained of cold, for they had stripped every comfort from her at the end. Two candles lit the cell, showing its desolation and the sorrowful, prostrate figure of the Queen.

CHAPTER XXII: *The Victim*

WITH the morning the Queen's judges came and read her sentence, and bade the executioner bind her wrists with cord. She protested against this last indignity, for the King had not been bound for the dreary passage through the streets.

It was probably some strange thought of earlier life which made Marie Antoinette robe herself in white. It was a flowing robe of muslin which she donned instead of black. She had new shoes brought to her for the day —dainty high-heeled shoes, in contrast with those which she had patched herself. Before she cut off her hair she had found a white linen cap to cover what remained of the auburn splendour of her youth—a few white locks strayed beneath the covering and made her look old and haggard though she put rouge upon her face. She was almost sightless owing to the close confinement in the cell, which was partly underground.

The Queen left the prison and found a cart waiting, for the prophecy was correct which

said that the King should be the last to ride to execution in a carriage. A tumbril had become a common sight to the spectators of the Paris streets, but Marie Antoinette had not looked for degradation such as this when she resigned herself to death. The executioner sat by her side and kept his hold upon the cord which bound her wrists, while the priest she would not hear rode with her too. He had accepted the Civil Constitution of the Church and could not confess one who had become devoted to the ancient Catholic faith.

There were jeers and insults from the populace who had once been lovers of the beautiful Dauphine. The spectacle attracted the lowest, for they now loved to see the aristocrats pass to their doom. The horse went very slowly, for the Queen "must be made to drink long of death."

There were troops to line the way, but the crowd beyond them thrust forth heads wearing the scarlet caps of liberty, and their hoarse voices uttered horrible threats. They judged it insolence that the Austrian was not intimidated on her long and dreary drive that rainy

The Execution of Marie Antoinette

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autumn morning. She did not seem to see her enemies, but sat upright and chafed somewhat against the cords which bound her till the gardens of the Tuileries were reached. The agony of remembrance proved too much for pride. In that place her little son had played.

She went up the scaffold steps. Tall and imposing, her figure stood outlined against the trees till she entreated the executioner to make haste. For death meant life to her who was alone on earth.

The Queen's head was shown to the people when it was cut off, and there were some who could rejoice at such a sight. But there were others in the crowd who shuddered, feeling that this was worse than regicide.

Yet vengeance would not fall upon the Republic as had been feared by those who put a Queen to death. The Royalist army was turned aside on the march to Paris and defeated at the battle of Wattignies. The fort of Maubeuge remained in patriot hands and blocked the invasion of the capital.

The Queen's martyrdom was not known in

the Temple till evening came. Simon drank merrily and made the young King drink with him.

Louis XVII did not long survive his mother, though there were always romantic stories, told by claimants to the throne, of his escape from prison, and these claimants each tried to prove that another child had been kept in the cell in his stead. He died after being tortured in a noisome place, where he was quite alone.

Madame Royale survived the tragedy and lived to see Provence upon the throne. Madame Elizabeth went to the scaffold, accused of being too loyal to the memory and fortunes of the tyrant, Louis Seize. Her life had ever been most saintly, but the Revolution needed blood.